

# **John Bull's Other Ireland**

## **Manchester-Irish Identities and a Generation of Performance**

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the  
University of Chester for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by

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### **Declaration**

The material being presented for examination is my own work and has not been submitted for an award of this, or any other HEI except in minor particulars which are explicitly noted in the body of the thesis. Where research pertaining to the thesis has been undertaken collaboratively, the nature of my individual contribution has been made explicit.

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## Abstract

This thesis provides an auto-ethnographically informed ‘making strange’ of the *mise-en-scène* of Irish working class domesticity in the North West of England as it was lived during the 1960s, 1970s and into the 1980s. The liminality of being a child of migrant parents is considered and the interstices of experience and identity in and of England and Ireland, Englishness and Irishness are explored. The first chapter of the thesis draws the reader into the initial frame of reference, the personal childhood ethnography that inspired this wider study, and considers Bhabha’s ‘shadow of the nation’ falling ‘on the condition of exile’ as one context for the development of individual identities. The second chapter examines the ways in which a performance studies approach provides a useful method for interrogating matters of place, personhood and citizenship whilst the third chapter introduces performance theory as a mechanism for exploring the ways in which quotidian and cultural performance have been harnessed as tools of negotiation. These are sometimes resistant, sometimes affirmative and sometimes celebratory acts in the construction of new identities. Ongoing performances reveal the embodied histories of individual performers, shaped in part by culture and memory, masking and unmasking to both construct and reveal layered identities.

The fourth chapter, provides the most obvious example of traditional fieldwork, and draws on interview extracts to provide key insights into aspects of the diasporic context, identifying and analyzing the many rehearsal and performance opportunities provided by growing up in Irish households in England, where identities were initially formed, informed, and performed. Bridging the distinction between autoethnography, performance ethnography and the ethnography of performance, this chapter engages in discussion with a range of contributors defamiliarising the domestic *mise-en-scène* whilst simultaneously recognizing a commonality of experience. These interviews are themselves a celebration of Irish identity performance and form an important bridge between the theoretical framework explored in the opening chapters and the subsequent case studies.

The final section of the thesis searches out a mirroring of these processes in the construction of theatrical and mediated performance – providing opportunities to both utilize and observe performance ethnography and the ethnography of performance. It is suggested that Terry Christian provides an affirmative yet angry celebration in a complex performed response to a complex *mise-en-scène*. A new reading of Steve Coogan's work then suggests three modes of performance: first, Coogan the outsider satirises British mores; second, Coogan plays sophisticated games of revealing and masking multiple versions of self; third, a searching and ultimately serious engagement with his engagement with Ireland.

The application of a performance theory perspective, in the context of this fraction of the Irish diaspora, reveals a playful and generous spirited approach to complex and serious matters of identity and place in the world – to the ways in which lives are led and meanings made through and for the generation of performance.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express deep gratitude to my supervisor Professor Peter Harrop. Spotting potential in early drafts he has propelled my work from being, in his words, “the beginnings of the first third of an idea” to the thesis presented here. Having worked closely together in the Faculty of Arts and Media and now having supervised this thesis, Peter probably knows more about me than just about any other living person. My appreciation goes to Professor Darren Sproston, Associate Dean and Head of the Department of Performing Arts for his unswerving optimism and incalculable levels of personal and professional support. Thanks must also go to Faculty Administrators Wendy Miller and Debbie Wilkinson who have supported me and the faculty through some very demanding times. I am also most grateful to the University of Chester and many university colleagues who recognized and engineered the flexibility required to engage in such study.

I am particularly appreciative to Steve Coogan and Terry Christian, who took time to share their personal reflections with me in support of this research, and to all of those who agreed to be interviewed for this study. Though you are mostly anonymised in the pages of this thesis you have brought to life, in a most illuminating and compelling way, the complexity and the fun of being raised in Irish households in England during the latter half of the twentieth century.

In writing this thesis I must recognise my Brother and Sister, Paul and Marie, who have intrinsically informed this work. Those nights performing as *The Bards of Bantry* will live long in the memory. Also to Paul, Andy and Kieran who wrote and performed now long forgotten songs by *The Quiet Men*. My wife, Caroline, deserves particular thanks for not “pampering life’s complexities” yet understanding my anxieties and shortcomings and who, alongside Peter, ensured that I kept this work on track. I genuinely could not have completed this work without her love and support. Also my beautiful daughter Leah, who kept me both grounded and confused, diluting my

authorial pretensions by reminding me that I was simply writing about “people who were half-Irish”

First and last, this thesis is dedicated to my father and *in memoriam* my mother.

## **John Bull's Other Ireland**

### **Manchester-Irish Identities and the Generation of Performance.**

Well now we're second generation and we've lived here all our lives

In England we feel Irish, in Ireland we're the yanks<sup>1</sup>

Born and bred in England divil a choice where we were born

But second generation's better than no generation at all.

Through extensive observation and evolving a think tank

I've discovered how we're Irish and yet considered yanks

And with a minor computation my findings are quite clear there must be

Millions of Irish-Americans born in England every year.

Title: Second Generation

Lyrics: Brendan O'Sullivan

Music: The Quiet Men<sup>2</sup> 1991

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<sup>1</sup> The Returned Yank is a common expression referring to supposedly financially secure migrants returning to Ireland from America. (See Ann Schofield, Journal of American Studies/Volume 47/Special Issue 04/November 2013, pp. 1175-1195, Irish Immigrants in New York City, Indiana University Press 2001, Linda Dowling Almeida). In my experience, it became a more encompassing term for any returning migrant, and extended to describing my visits to my parents' home in the UK

<sup>2</sup> The Quiet Men were a Manchester based Irish folk band of which I was a founder member. Active 1987 – 1993.



## Preface

### Locating Theory and Method in Performance Studies and Ethnography.

To consider performance is to study how we represent ourselves and repeat those representations within everyday life, working on the assumption that culture is unthinkable without performance.

(Striff, 2002. p.1)

Because of the inclusionary spirit of Performance Studies (and the theoretical concern with what 'inclusion' presumes), the field is particularly attuned to issues of place, personhood, cultural citizenship, and equity.

(Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1999. p.1)

The 'performance turn' represents a major movement of the last fifty years which has impacted across the arts and social sciences. To date, the magnum opus of this orientation has undoubtedly been Philip Auslander's *Performance: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies* (2003) through which the interdisciplinary and plural histories of performance studies are traced, interrogated and edited across four volumes, 1800 pages and eighty-eight essays. The broad field had already been provisionally defined and disseminated by Marvin Carlson via *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (1996); Felicia Hughes-Freeland *Ritual, Performance, Media* (1997) and Erin Striff in *Performance Studies* (2002). By the time Richard Schechner's *Performance Studies: An Introduction* was published in 2002, a (literally) text book summation of many years writing and practice, along with Henry Bial's subsequently accompanying *Performance Studies Reader* (2004), performance studies was already emerging as a discipline in its own right. Or, as some of its proponents prefer, 'post-discipline' or 'inter-discipline'. Although the exponents of performance studies haven't always liked to be pinned down

the following passage from Schechner, arguably the discipline's founding father, remains apposite:

First, behaviour is the "object of study" of performance studies. Although performance studies scholars use the "archive" extensively...their dedicated focus is on the "repertory" – namely, what people do in the activity of their doing it. ...fieldwork as "participant observation" is a much prized method adopted from anthropology and put to new uses...In anthropology, for the most part, the "home culture" is Western, the "other" non-Western. But, in performance studies, the "other" may be a part of one's own culture (non-Western or Western), or even an aspect of one's own behaviour. That positions the performance studies fieldworker at a Brechtian distance allowing for criticism, irony, and personal commentary, as well as sympathetic participation. In an active way, one performs fieldwork. Taking this critical distance from the objects of study and self invites revision, the recognition that social circumstances – including knowledge itself – are not fixed but subject to the "rehearsal process" of testing and revising... (Schechner, 2002, p. x.).

John Warren clarifies the kind of understanding that such method might illuminate. "For myself", he writes, "I turned to performance ethnography because it gives life to people in context, makes embodied practices meaningful, and generates analysis for seeing the conditions that make the socially taken-for-granted visible as a process." (Warren, 2006. p. 318.) By coincidence (given the subject matter of this thesis) Warren goes on, in the same passage, to quote Corey's (1996) article on identity performance in an Irish bar:

To view the social construction of identity as an activity, a performance, is to imbue the process with play and discovery. The production of identity, negotiation of meaning, arbitration of power, and definition of self are constructs to be sure, but these constructs are produced, refined, and re-produced through performance. Thus, the study of performance provides a heuristic device for social constructionism. (Warren, 2006. p. 318).

This spirit of inquiry, the adoption of a potentially playful and dynamic perspective on the serious matter of identity construction, has been the central

appeal of performance studies as an overriding approach to my material in the making of this thesis.

But first some clarifications. There remain two distinct current usages of the phrase Performance Studies. One of these usages still seems predominant in the UK and focusses on, as Heike Roms phrases it, “a privileging of the living avant garde and innovative, interdisciplinary aesthetic practices” (Roms 2010. p.63). This usage reflects a deliberate change and adoption in arts terminology – it is widely utilised in performing arts departments - to clearly separate out new performance endeavour (some of which is overtly anti-theatrical or avowedly post-dramatic in the manner of live-art or performance art) from traditionally defined western performance genres. The specificity of this UK usage was first considered in a special edition of *Studies in Theatre and Performance* devoted to, as the editorial phrases it, ‘The Practice of Performance Studies in The United Kingdom’ and was a particular focus of Harrop’s 2005 article ‘What’s in a Name’ (*Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 25 (3), pp.189-200.). The issue was later revisited by McKenzie, Roms and Wee in *Contesting Performance: Global Sites of Research* (2010) notably in Roms’ chapter The Practice Turn: Performance and the British Academy (Roms 2010, pp 51 – 71). In the USA, meanwhile, Richard Schechner and colleagues in the Performance Studies Department at New York University and elsewhere had, for many years, consistently referred to a ‘broad-spectrum’ approach in order to embrace social-scientific and cultural study notions of performativity in everyday life, in identity construction, contestation and re-affirmation, and in cultural practice as broadly conceived. In this understanding of performance studies the study and practice of drama, dance and music, of the theatre and performing arts as generally understood, become mere sub-sets of an all-encompassing theatrum mundi – the world as theatre - in which existence may be viewed as an oscillation between action and spectating that results in human beings as, in Boal’s famous construct, dynamic ‘spect-actors’. (Although this thesis does include analysis of live and broadcast performance as well as film it is important to note, even in the particularity of those considerations that its theoretical and methodological position derives consistently from the broad-spectrum model.)

A second point of clarification is required regarding the history of ethnography and the current interface of ethnography, performance and performance studies. Although ethnographic method is increasingly employed by some performance studies exponents, just as the performance turn has influenced trends in ethnography, ethnography per se has a distinct history. It is a development from the North American symbolic interactionist school of sociological inquiry and represents both a method and a particular ambient in reflecting on that method. In his book *Passing the Time in Ballymenone* the folklorist and ethnographer Henry Glassie (1982) emphasises the methodological centrality of interaction and collaboration in ethnography, of “the ability to converse intimately” (p. 14) and the “imagination to enter between the facts, to feel what it is like to be, to think and act as another person” (p.12). These ideas are central in distinguishing ethnography from an ‘old’ anthropology which strove for objective distance between work in the field and work in the study. As Schiefflin (1998) has pointed out, based on his own fieldwork experience, “the simplest lesson for anthropology is that the exact nature of the performative relationship between the central performers and the other participants (including spectators) in a cultural event cannot be assumed analytically, but must be investigated ethnographically.” (p. 203). However, even within contemporary ethnography, there are two very distinct strands of endeavour, both concerned with empathy and the interstices of interaction, and both making considered use of the word performance. These are ‘ethnographies of performance’ and ‘performance ethnography’ respectively. The former takes an ethnographic approach to the existing performative; employs and applies a questioning of what constitutes performance and the interactions that sustain the performative, in order to better understand that performance. This is the approach that underpins much of this thesis and is strongly foregrounded in the chapter ‘From Masks to Voices’ and the subsequent analyses of the work of Terry Christian and Steve Coogan. The latter, performance ethnography, is the rehearsed and performed outcome of ethnographic research. My chapter ‘Intimacy and Distance’ employs both these approaches insofar as my shared background with the people I am researching, that of the second-generation Irish in Britain, acts as an

empathetic driver for the interview sessions, which themselves become performative and occasionally re-affirmatory celebrations of shared identity and cultural context. We will see reflected in this chapter too, De Andrade's approach,

informed by symbolic interactionist and social constructionist theoretical perspectives...[that] view race and ethnic identity as having complex meanings that are produced in social interaction...represented by collections of symbols or signifiers that include things such as physical attributes, as well as behaviours, family relations, group rituals, and even clothing (De Andrade, 2002. p. 272).

The distinctions between these two approaches have been considered in depth in two journal special editions: *Text and Performance Quarterly* [Vol 26, No. 4, October 2006] and *Canadian Theatre Review* [151, summer 2012] as well as by Harrop and Njaradi in their volume *Performance and Ethnography* (2013) and in the forthcoming volume by Landis and McCauley: *Cultural Performance: Ethnographic Approaches to Performance Studies*. While the debate continues on the distinctiveness of these two modes of operation, Norman Denzin's monograph *Performance Ethnography: critical pedagogy and the politics of culture* (Denzin, 2003) remains the standard text on performance ethnography. Even in that very specific arena, however, Denzin is not without his critics as exemplified by Paul Atkinson's review essay 'Performing ethnography and the ethnography of performance' published in the *British Journal of Sociology of Education* [Vol 25. No. 1, February 2004 pp. 107 - 114]. Atkinson (2004) suggests that: "the performative move that Denzin and his collaborators make is the creation of performance works and texts. In other words, the ethnographic text is the basis for a performance in its own right." (p.109.) Atkinson goes on to say,

...there are, after all, many forms of performance that can be explored ethnographically. The ethnography of performance is potentially more rich and varied – and of potentially greater analytical significance – than performance texts derived from ethnography. The creation of performance pieces leaves unexplored the nature of performance itself. (Atkinson, 2004. p. 111.)

It will become apparent in this thesis that the nature, form and content of performance is always the focus of exploration, although several different modes of performance – the personal, social, cultural and artistic, are scrutinised at different points in the thesis. Furthermore, it has been possible, and my chapter ‘intimacy and distance’ provides the clearest example, to reconcile and synthesize a concern for the analysis of performance even while being part of that performance.

Before moving on it is important to note that both the ethnography of performance and performance ethnography have developed an auto-ethnographic sub-genre. (Indeed, in this respect, performance auto-ethnography, if we may term it that, mirrors a trend in the contemporary performing arts more generally as described by Deirdre Heddon (2007) in her work *Autobiography and Performance*. Exponents of autoethnography claim to strive for the truest understanding of the self-in-context, derived from the interactions that - to the symbolic interactionist and ethnographic eye - constitute that context. An accessible distinction between both these strands of ethnography (on the one hand) and autoethnography (on the other hand) has been succinctly captured by Jane Bacon in her move to autoethnography: “I decided I would begin to ask those same questions of myself”. (Bacon, 2013. p. 123.). Atkinson points out:

Autoethnography has a variety of related connotations. They all imply a radical weakening or obliteration of the distinction between the observer and the observed, the researcher and the topic of inquiry. The ethnographer herself/himself becomes as much the topic of reflection as the research resource. (Atkinson, 2004, p.108).

This summarises the position I have striven for in the opening chapter of the thesis ‘Forgotten but not Gone’ where my intention is to draw the reader in and understand my ambition to make strange the childhood *mise-en-scène* in order to frame the ethnography of the performances that have generated and negotiated second generation Irish identities. But Atkinson again offers a corrective:

"In general, however, I find some problems with this genre of (auto) ethnographic interpretive writing. I want to suggest that in the pursuit of a performative ethnography, Denzin [et al]...and others are reflecting far too narrow a sense of performance. The scope of their texts seems unnecessarily restricted. They insist that the personal is political, but then remain in the realm of the personal and relegate the political to an economy of personal experience and emotional response...I am not alone in thinking that the 'autoethnographic' mode carries with it dangers as well as intriguing possibilities...There is a terrible danger, it seems to me, of collapsing the social world into one's own lifeworld. There is, therefore a terrible risk of trivialising complex and serious social issues. (Atkinson, 2004. p.110).

While agreeing with Atkinson on the risks there are, I believe, admirable intentions and qualities to be found in the methods of both performance ethnography and autoethnography. In her essay 'Marking New Directions in Performance Ethnography', Della Pollack (2006) discusses her view on the "possibilities for new work in performance ethnography... by rehearsing some of what performance has done for ethnography" (p. 325), and suggests,

1. It has shifted the object of ethnography to performance, redefining the cultural field that the ethnographer writes as broadly composed of radically contingent, omni-permeable, micro- and macroperformances.
2. It has shifted the relationship of the researcher and the ostensibly "researched" (the field and field subjects), reconfiguring longstanding subject-object relations as coperformative; beyond anything like documentary interview: as the reciprocal intervention of each on the other, transforming each in turn. (p. 325)

The greatest potential of this approach is that it makes possible "an embodied, affective and sensory ethnography that privileges encounters between ethnographer, participants and practices as key to understanding and knowledge". (Harrop, 2013. p.18). Della Pollack has pointed out that "all too often scholarly rigor is identified with the consistent application of a single method". (Pollack, 2006. p. 326). She goes on to describe the inevitable interruption of one method by others "especially by anything that involves

actually talking with people". (Pollack, 2006. p. 326.) There is a tension between Atkinson's critique of Denzin and the desired outcomes suggested by Pollack and Harrop. In this thesis I have sought to find a track through autoethnography, the ethnography of performance (with some limited employment of performance ethnography), within the overarching scope of broad spectrum performance studies.

Finally, a circularity has been suggested which requires further explication. Atkinson suggests that a performance ethnography, in the creation of a performance text, risks ignoring the performative object of the original ethnographic effort. He specifically critiques Schieffelin's essay *Problematizing Performance* when he remarks that "The only limitation with such accounts is that they treat performance as so pervasive in cultural affairs that there remains little to say specifically about the performing arts or the extra-ordinary performances of art, music, opera and so on." (Atkinson, 2004. p. 109.)

The structure of this thesis deliberately concludes with the detailed consideration of live theatre, broadcast television and film. But these analyses remain firmly within a broad-spectrum performance studies approach, and remain steadfastly concerned with the ethnography of performance, because they focus on the refraction of their originators experience of social and cultural performativity through the prism of the arts. They offer a fresh reading of performance texts precisely because they draw on performance theory and ethnographic method.

For clarity, and at risk of some limited repetition, it may be useful to indicate the methodological and theoretical considerations that inform my chapters in sequence and therefore constitute the thesis. 'Forgotten but not gone' forms the introduction and uses autoethnography to explain the original impetus for the work in a 'making strange' (a *verfremdungseffekt* in Brechtian terms) of the *mise-en-scène* of my childhood. It strives to balance the record of personal experience 'within and against' the performative world of the subsequent ethnography. Chapter one, 'A Nation Once Again', returns to the Kirshenblatt-



Gimblett (1999) epigraph, to examine the ways in which performance studies lends itself to matters of “place, personhood, [and] cultural citizenship”. (p. 1). In some ways this chapter is a step back into conventional cultural studies. This consideration of the ‘shadow of the nation’ provides a meta-frame for the subsequent performance ethnography. Chapter two, ‘From Masks to Voices’, is a theorised ethnography of performances within the social and cultural milieux of the first and second generations of the diaspora in Manchester. Chapter 3, ‘Intimacy and distance’, is the most obviously fieldwork based chapter and provides detailed verbatim samples from conversations with people like myself about childhood, about the present, about their performative lives in the diasporic space. These conversations in the ‘revealing quotidian’ personalise the political discussion of the preceding chapter, and bridge the distinction between autoethnography (my understanding of our shared experiences), performance ethnography (my performance in conducting these interviews as someone who has also lived this history), and the ethnography of performance manifest in the continued gathering of ethnographic data. These interviews are an effort to realise the ‘dialogous’ (in Conquergood’s 2009 phrase), by which ethnographers and performance studies practitioners try to shed the myth of objectivity in order to get closer to the truth. Chapter 5, ‘Who the f\*\*\* does Terry Christian think he is’, is an example of the ethnography of performance applied to, I suggest, an example of performance ethnography. Since Christian is a second-generation Irish performer who had grown up in Manchester, it was fortuitous for me that he should have used his background as autoethnographic source material for a live show. This has facilitated a reading of his work that highlights the distinction between theatre studies and performance studies by foregrounding the interplay of everyday and extra-daily in Christian’s work. Chapter 6, on the work of Steve Coogan, extends this consideration of the autoethnographic to also include the ethnographic as source material, with reference to a more complex and extended body of work, again proposing a new reading of Coogan’s work as a developmental and considered series of responses to life in and of the diasporic space.

The overarching position of the work is determinedly that of performance studies as summarised by this deeply humane plea from Edward Schiefflin.

The central issue of performativity, whether in ritual performance, theatrical entertainment or the social articulation of ordinary human situations, is the imaginative creation of a human world. The creation of human realities entails ontological issues, and these need to be explored ethnographically rather than a priori assumed. It is time for anthropologists to include this task once again in greater depth if they are to elucidate more clearly the processes entailed when human beings construct a human world. (Schiefflin, 1998. p. 205).

Every effort has been taken to embed these ideas in the detail, tone and spirit of the thesis. I have tried to avoid undue restatement of these ideas so as to establish a level of flow in the writing, enabling author and reader, in Schechner's words, to "position[s] the performance studies fieldworker at a Brechtian distance allowing for criticism, irony, and personal commentary, as well as sympathetic participation." (Schechner, 2006, p. x)

## Chapter 1

### Forgotten but not Gone

As a child, and long before the BBC's comedy series *Goodness Gracious Me* (Bhaskar, Ghir, Gupta et al., 1996) introduced us to the Indian father who believed everyone and everything to be Indian<sup>3</sup>, my father was 'outing' people in the public realm as Catholic and therefore almost inevitably Irish or Irish descent. Whether this was an attempt on his part to validate his religion in a foreign 'Godless' country or to help us feel a sense of identity within his and our host nation is difficult now to say, nevertheless, this sense of kinship and alignment was a common occurrence in the O'Sullivan household. This 'making visible' of religious persuasion and tangible association with the cultural ethnicity of other similarly culturally displaced people in the public eye, carried significance for us as children growing up in an English town that exhibited its own youthful sectarianism. This was memorably evidenced for me when choosing sides for street football matches when, despite being of a reasonable playing standard, I have been side-lined through being Catholic if not directly for being Irish.

Being Catholic and being Irish have become inextricably linked in narratives of Irishness, (Harte, 2006; Walsh, 2011; Gray, 2006) and as a child they were indeed inseparable aspects of our identity. Dressed in our 'Sunday best' on our way to Mass every Sunday morning, made us visibly different from others in our area in contrast to the often-cited view of the invisible Irish in post-war Britain. Narratives of visibility versus invisibility associated with a consideration of the Irish in Britain continues to be both fascinating and contradictory. Reviewing Wills (2015),<sup>4</sup> Declan Kiberd (2016) suggests, "The Irish, though for long the largest migrant group, were seriously under-recorded

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<sup>3</sup> The character insists that everything and everyone of note came from India including William Shakespeare, Cliff Richard and the Shadows, The Royal Family (except Prince Charles) and Jesus.

<sup>4</sup> Wills, C. (2015). *The Best Are Leaving: Emigration and Post-War Irish Culture*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

and under-studied - with the result that they sometimes seemed to have become invisible and inaudible to themselves.<sup>5</sup>” Arrowsmith (2006) has argued, “Without the signifiers of difference upon which conventional discourses of ‘race’ rely, the Irish...[have] become invisible in Britain, their presence unrecognised and their political voice unheard” (p.165) and references Greenslade’s (1992) observation in support: “One feature of Irishness in England is its relative invisibility.... English racism focuses upon colour of skin rather than ethnicity. In this milieu, the Irish are literally invisible until they open their mouths” (p. 216). Greenslade then propose two further ways in which the Irish became invisible:

The first arises from an administrative decision of the British government during the 1950s to render them so by treating Ireland as part of the British Isles... The second... comes from an implicit decision of those Irish who came in the post-war period ‘to keep their heads down and their mouths shut’.  
(p. 216)

Linked to the latter concern, Liam Harte (2006), has written extensively on Irish diasporic literature, and more recently on biographical short-story narratives, and embraces Naughton’s view that

There was an almost inborn impression of belonging to the ignorant, the poor, and the uneducated - the ones who had nothing to give to the world but the labour of their two hands, and the best thing to do was not to expose yourself to ridicule by writing, but to conceal yourself and your thoughts - keep your mouth shut, stick to your job, and leave writing and the running of the world to your superiors and those in authority above you. So forcibly was this concept thrust upon one that it became a fact of life, against which it seemed pointless to struggle.<sup>6</sup> (p. 226)

Another reason for this invisibility was a consciously assimilationist position taken on arrival. This was not born out of a lack of cultural or intellectual confidence but out of a desire to forget the Ireland that they had left; the Ireland

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<sup>5</sup> On line review see <https://breac.nd.edu/articles/emigration-once-again/> (retrieved 17.02.2017)

<sup>6</sup> Harte quotes from Bill Naughton’s, now out of print publication, *On the Pig’s Back, An Autobiographical Excursion*. Published Oxford University Press, 1988.

that had not been able to provide for them - an Island of which they were ashamed.

Through this thesis, I propose to draw on a “broad spectrum” performance studies approach, for which Schechner (1988) required an expansion of “our vision of what performance is, to study it, not only as art but as a means of understanding historical, social and cultural processes” (p. 6). In later exploration Schechner explains “that social circumstances – including knowledge itself – are not fixed but subject to the “rehearsal process” of testing and revising”. (Schechner, 2002. p.x). Through the first three chapters, and in establishing the wider framework for emerging Irish identities, the thesis will consider the global, national, local and personal contexts that provided the rehearsal spaces for the development of Irish identities in the England. Through the thesis, the nature, form and content of ‘performance’ remains the focus and several different modes of performance are identified – personal, social, cultural and artistic, which contribute to a reconsideration of the understanding that the Irish only became recognisable on opening their mouths. Through interviews and case studies in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 I will reflect on the ethnographic text as source material for both the generation of identity and the generation of multifaceted performances of identity from those who, even on opening their mouths, could continue to move unrecognized and until fairly recently remained largely unmarked – the English-born children of the first and second-generation Irish migrant. Certainly, the idea that we, as children of Irish Catholic descent being raised in working-class areas of Manchester and Teesside, were invisible *per se* is not a wholly accurate reflection of the experiences I have encountered personally and through this research.

Growing up on Teesside, attending Catholic schools from infancy until leaving for university, serving on the altar at Mass, and mixing with my parents’ friends, we socialized regularly with very few wholly by descent, ‘English’ people. Most, though certainly not all of our school friends, were descended within one or two generations from Irish parents. It was not until I left home in 1984, and went to Huddersfield Polytechnic, that I began to meet a greater proportion of

'non-Irish' people. That said, it was there I met and shared accommodation and close friendships with students who were themselves second, third and fourth generation Irish, attended St Patrick's Church, became a member of the Irish Democratic League Club, and worked in The Olde Hatte, a town centre pub catering largely to the Irish and those of Irish descent (and an elderly African-Caribbean community), and which was still owned by the family of Joyces that ran it when my father worked in that same town thirty years previously. Indeed, when I arrived in Huddersfield, The Olde Hatte was almost worthy of being recognized as a *Gaeltacht*<sup>7</sup> area as Irish was the main language spoken in some of the corners of its four small rooms and many games of '25'<sup>8</sup> were conducted solely through the medium of the Irish language. Back on Teesside, the rite of passage that resulted in admittance to similar card schools, was of major personal significance. Learning the game took years of practice at home and years of tableside observation in church affiliated social clubs and Irish centres. Graduating to the table was a liminal experience and being accepted as an equal player in the game itself an acknowledgement of recognition and belonging.

That this largely working-class migrant group were considered invisible at that time is a common thread in current writings on the subject. If the Irish were, as is claimed, invisible, in what sense were we invisible? How could we be hidden in plain sight? The 1967 RTE documentary, *Emigration Part of Our Irishness*<sup>9</sup>, follows a number of individual migrants travelling on the boat from Ireland to England searching for work, investigating their motivation and outlook. Patrick Gallagher's educated Irish accent and didactic voiceover declares,

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<sup>7</sup> The term *Gaeltacht* is used to denote those areas in Ireland where the Irish language is, or was until the recent past, the main spoken language of a substantial number of the local population. See <http://www.udaras.ie/en/an-ghaeilge-an-ghaeltacht/an-ghaeltacht/>.

<sup>8</sup> Ireland's national card game, related to the classic Spanish game of *ombre*. It was played under the name *maw* by the British King James I and was later called *spoil five* from one of its principal objectives. From it derives the Canadian game of *forty-fives*. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1232991/twenty-five>.

<sup>9</sup> Emigration to England. See <http://www.rte.ie/archives/exhibitions/1030-emigration-once-again/139201-emigration-to-london/>

Arrival demands an immediate process of orientation, finding your way about, the grind of looking for a job and for somewhere to live. Many emigrants have friends and relatives to help them. They can by-pass the employment agencies and various Irish institutions. They can vanish quite easily into anonymity. (Emigration to London, n.d.)

With this anonymity and invisibility however, also came isolation and loneliness for many. The 1949 Act of Parliament had ensured free passage for Irish citizens between the two countries which, in principle, allowed easy return. Many of course never went back. This had the dual impact of silencing their political voice, such as it was at the time in Ireland as they left it, whilst their new anonymity continuously removed it on entry to England. The migrant Irish may have felt politically without influence both in Ireland and in England, unrepresented, neglected and ignored. Perhaps this suited some who were keen to work without being taxed on their earnings, move freely and quickly backwards and forwards between the two countries and, in the decades immediately following World War II, avoid being drafted into the British Army. It is conceivable therefore, that the working-class post-war migrant generation estranged from their place of birth, lacking the agency of the post-famine and late-Victorian, upper middle and Anglo-Irish aristocratic classes, did feel themselves to be truly invisible.

For some then, this anonymity might have been a choice, for others an unintended consequence of their movement back and forth. Nevertheless, a lack of education, financial security and cultural capital and later the continuing 'Troubles' in the north of Ireland restricted the likelihood of this generation of migrant working-class rising to any significant levels of societal or political prominence. Arguably, the most problematic of hurdles for the Irish in Britain, became the severity of a number of high profile attacks in England, notably Birmingham, Manchester<sup>10</sup>, Warrington and London, which heightened suspicion of the Irish throughout the country. These attacks raised Irish prominence in terms of news worthiness, political significance and visibility

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<sup>10</sup> For a consideration of the 1996 bombing of Manchester City Centre see Hazley, B. (2013) Irish Studies Review. Vol 21:3 pp. 326-341.

whilst diminishing significantly any positive cultural agency that might have been derived from actually being from Ireland. This wider sense of 'invisibility' was to change again in succeeding decades, evidenced most readily in the rise of the ubiquitous themed 'Irish pub,' through which it might be proposed that Ireland consciously built and reinforced its own myths, in the pursuit of a recognisable global Irish brand. R. F. Foster (2008) suggested that this project "has rebounded on the island (of Ireland) itself in the shape of pre-ordained and received images of history-as-kitsch existing alongside the real achievements of Irish high culture in the late twentieth century" (p.155). Effectively ignoring achievements in Irish literature, music, culture and philosophy, as Foster might suggest, placed much of it under the heading of 'good *craic*'. The ultimate irony of this kitsch branding exercise being the introduction of the Irish themed pub to Ireland.

Mediated representations of Ireland and the Irish were therefore dominated by a negative othering, portrayed as anti-English, violent and unreconstructed. With help from the Irish themselves this portrayal shifted to one of debilitating kitsch-ness; an unthreatening nation of clowns and drinkers who could be counted on to have a good time. Their political significance, as an increasing number of government documents released from the time are now evidencing, was greater than was then understood but history and memory still point to the relative invisibility of the majority of working-class Irish who asked little of their new domestic setting and is separate to the wider and more politically significant and continuing 'Irish Question'<sup>11</sup>.

The Irish working class community, an overly broad generalisation in itself, congregating in Irish and Catholic centres, clubs and pubs, Catholic churches, working together in the construction industry and building networks in and around the Catholic education system could be considered insular. However, external performances of Irishness, by the first generation migrant and their

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<sup>11</sup> A phrase used in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries to describe the cause of Irish Nationalism and the continuing call for an independent Ireland. See, for example, McCaffrey, L. J. *The Irish Question: Two Centuries of Conflict*. Lexington: The University of Kentucky. (Retrieved 01.04.17 from Project Muse database).



second- and third-generation offspring, were mediated through the ritual opportunities presented by these same places of education, entertainment, worship and work. As a child of a first-generation migrant, I would therefore reflect that much of my childhood was spent observing, rehearsing and subsequently acting out our roles in the unfolding drama of Irish performance that existed in England at that time, and that this was largely, though not exclusively, for the benefit of the Irish-Catholic community itself. In essence, the blanket around my childhood world in England, and for many children growing up in similar Irish households, was largely woven from Irish cloth.

These external expressions and performances of Irishness, dress sense (more of which later), gravitation to certain occupations, the centrality of the pub for emigrants inhabiting shared bedrooms with no private space, and the ubiquity of the Irish Dance Hall, contributed to what Brah (1996) has called a diasporic space. This narrow and to an extent isolated diasporic space provided the stage upon which narratives of Irishness could be enacted in relative safety. The cultural isolation of this diasporic space had the effect of highlighting difference rather than necessarily hiding it and as a result this post-war migrant generation were not physically, spatially or geographically invisible at all, and most certainly not to each other. A subsequent wider diasporic space, which Brah (1996) describes as being “inhabited not only by those who have migrated and their descendants, but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous”, (p. 181) then provided a larger stage and audience for such performances. At the risk of reiteration, the stages and performances of the first-generation migrant, particularly in the smaller diasporic space of the Irish pubs and clubs, allowed the Irish to recognise themselves and not be invisible. But in this self-ghettoization, the overwhelming culture became Irish and as a result the second-generation didn't recognise the Irishness of their environment simply assuming this was how the world was – in effect Irishness became invisible due to its all-pervading nature – only becoming apparent when they moved out of this safe and constructed domestic sphere.

Though I suggest that these performances of identity were largely played out

for the benefit of the Irish community itself, the same self-reinforcing picture of Irishness and the Irish community was, of course, played out to external audiences in the wider diasporic space, but often in a more controlled and ritualistic manner. Klein, Spears and Reicher (2007) suggest, “Identity performance may simultaneously have to address in-group and out-group audiences, and it may orient to both identity consolidation and identity mobilization” (p. 41). We might consider here church-led activities such as Whit Walks, Marian Festival parades, open air masses, and the wearing of shamrock on St Patrick’s Day and the St Patrick’s Day parades themselves<sup>12</sup>. In the larger cities and particularly London the recognizable tropes of the nurse and the navvy were evident. In the case of the latter, the passing world could see men lining the streets at day break to wait in line for work ‘on the lump’<sup>13</sup>, and in the case of the former, by the end of the 1960s according to a recent BBC 4 documentary *Hail Marys and Mini Skirts*<sup>14</sup>, 12% of all Britain’s nurses were Irish nationals.

Klein et al. (2007) citing Spears et al. (2004)<sup>15</sup> continues, “Automatic or habitual group behaviour would not normally count as performance” (p. 41). To some therefore, these explicit signifiers of Irishness might not be considered performances at all but more simply expressions of religious affiliation through the rituals of the Mass, as a tangible contact with the land of their birth through the wearing of shamrock received from Ireland, or simply a means to an end through securing a day’s work. I would counter that it is precisely in the subconscious performance, in and through memory, however hidden or organic, that the binding core of identity is to be found. This hidden, buried or sub-conscious revelation of self is perhaps the most interesting and

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<sup>12</sup> For examples of studies relating to St Patrick’s Day parades see Scully, Marc (2010). *Discourses of authenticity and national identity among the Irish diaspora in England*. PhD thesis, The Open University. Also, Walter, Bronwen (2008a). ‘Ireland the Festive and the Tragic’ *Celebrations of Irishness in Britain: second generation experiences of St. Patrick’s Day* (Eds M. C. Consideré-Charon and M. Savaric Cambridge Scholars Press, 2008)

<sup>13</sup> “Self-employed builders in the building trade considered collectively, esp. with reference to tax and national insurance evasion. See <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/the-lump>

<sup>14</sup> Transmitted Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2014. Produced by Sushma Puri. Tigereye Production for BBC Radio 4. (“Hail Marys and Miniskirts - BBC Radio 4”, n.d.)

<sup>15</sup> Spears, Gordijn, Dijksterhuis, & Stapel, 2004.

important aspect of legacy identity and of both inter- and intra-generational identity performance. It is precisely in these accidental expressions of identity that the self is most clearly revealed.

Multiple performers and audiences shared these external displays which came to be representative of Irishness and Catholicism. One might suggest it was to build self-confidence through a statement of collective identity but could it have been something less conscious and more organic and integral? These performances of collective and individual identity, for that is most surely what they were, provided the building blocks for a new Irishness which would be consolidated by future generations, giving rise to a clearer and more discrete identity for the Irish in Britain. However, the period of transition, in its juxtaposing of competitive religious and ethnic cultures, was to leave their children, ungrounded and rootless for decades.

No less than these external expressions of Irishness, everyday Irishness I contend, was similarly performative. Billig (1995) uses the term *Banal nationalism* to describe the conscious and political restating of culture: "...to cover the ideological habits which enable the established nations of the west to be reproduced.... It is argued that these habits are not removed from everyday life..." (p. 6). This suggests that through repetition, familiarity, and the 'hiding in plain sight' of everyday memorabilia and (often) kitsch accessories, Irish homes in England recalled and reinforced notions of 'Irishness' and an allegiance to Ireland. This deliberate staging of the domestic realm provided an essential *mise-en-scène*<sup>16</sup> for the unfolding drama of Irish identity rehearsal and performance.

It will have been a commonplace for second generation Irish children to find themselves sleeping under the electric rose-glow of the holy family, regularly re-affixing the head of the Child of Prague to its body, being surrounded by calcified angels and saints providing souvenirs from the holy shrines of Knock and Lourdes, and being reminded proverbially and most ironically in the form

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<sup>16</sup> The deliberate staging of people, set and objects within a stage or frame.

of a commemorative ashtray, to hope 'you arrive in Heaven a half hour before the devil knows you are dead'. Yet these everyday reminders of religion and ethnicity were not only reminders of the 'Ould Country' for the parents and older generations but also pointers for the second and subsequent generations towards the importance placed on Catholicism, homeland and nationhood. It is against this *mise-en-scène*, and I use the term deliberately to convey the conscious staging of Irishness in the realms of the domestic, that diasporic children of the migrant working class Irish were raised. Banal though these everyday objects were, benign they were not and they remain in the cultural memory of many English-born people of Irish descent as my later conversations with a number of second and third generation Irish will explore. Through this creation of an emigrant *mise-en-scène*, evidencing a conscious sense of the deliberate displaying of Irishness, notions of Irishness were passively insinuated into daily routines and passed on to their children. Gillespie's (1995) interviews with children of the North Indian diaspora reflects, "Delhi is much more westernised than Southall...Lots of people in Southall are living in the India they left behind and they don't realise how fashions and other things have changed" (p. 180). In a not dissimilar Irish context, this may simultaneously reflect the continuation of Irish traditions relocated to England and nostalgia for a distant and disappearing Ireland. Within a decade, this empathy and connectivity with the past would be levelled as a criticism against the second-generation Irish in England and result in the labelling of them as 'Plastic Paddies'. A term Campbell (2011) explains as, "fundamentally, a derisive allusion to the perceived inauthenticity of the second-generation's identification with Irishness" (p. 7).

It is important to reflect for a moment on the influence of the English education system as a contradictory *mise-en-scène* for the second generation and the way in which their Irishness and Englishness has been perceived. That English schools did not encourage the consideration of Irish history or ethnicity, despite their symbiotic relationship to England and the English, did not help bridge these divides and has been recognised by Hickman, Walter, Moran and Bradley (2010) who observed "the absence from the curriculum of reference to Irish history or culture" (ESRC Project, para 6, Full Report).

Analysing individual and group responses in Banbury “as a case study of a particularly ‘English’ milieu...confirmed that Irish history had been absent from their formal education, even in Catholic schools where second generation Irish people comprised the majority of pupils.” (ESRC Project, Para. 30, Full Report). To have your own experiences written out of history in your everyday schooling is at least neglectful if not dishonest. Walter (2008a) also highlighted, “the ambivalence of the Catholic Church towards the Irishness of the second generation” (p. 198) despite the fact that for many children and schools, the Catholic Church was represented by Irish men and women as priests, nuns and teachers. Oliver P. Rafferty (2013) captures the reasons for this most effectively:

When the Troubles broke out, but especially with the re-emergence of the IRA and therefore the gun in Irish politics, bishops and priests sought to distinguish clearly the Catholic community from violent republicanism. The church repeatedly condemned and excoriated Republican paramilitaries as utterly unrepresentative of the church and the Irish people. The IRA responded in kind by declaring that the church was an instrument of British Imperialism in Ireland and whatever its teaching on other matters, its view on the ‘armed struggle’ simply could not determine the right of people to bring about change in Northern Irish society by force. (p. 16)

Within this schism lies some explanation for the position of the Catholic Church in the English Catholic school system. Whilst seeking to distance itself from the high profile ‘Irishness’, the politically motivated and deadly activities of the IRA and its affiliates that filled the newspapers and TV screens at the time, the Church maintained its audience and influence through its place in the diasporic landscape of school and religious observance in England. However, in so vocally distancing itself from the violent struggles in the North of Ireland the Church simultaneously highlighted its proximity to it. Rafferty (2013) describes this dichotomy: “There emerged then the classic archetype of struggle between an authoritarian ecclesiastical hierarchy and a violent dissent group which as a result brought further attention to the fact that in both cases most of whose members were, at least nominally, Catholic” (p. 16). Perhaps being brought up in an environment within which narratives of Irishness were

underscored by notions of victimhood, oppression and indeed the continuing famine narratives of the last century, it was no surprise that that many of the second and subsequent generations turned their backs on religion if not Irishness. Clearly linking Irishness to armed struggle against an English oppressor was simply business as usual. However, we will see my interviewees drew a clear line between the activities of the IRA during the 1970s and 1980s and the arguably romanticised view of the 'old' IRA, to which some claim their families had belonged. In the *mise-en-scène* of the home, if not at school, the songs and stories commemorating the armed 'insurgency' that took place only a half century earlier, formed part of the underpinning narrative of diasporic life and provided a historical context, however romanticised or fetishized, that was missing from the school curriculum. The learning of these songs and importantly the performance of these songs became yet another rite of passage. Such examples of highly symbolic ethnic continuity and revivalism provided aural and visual stimulus to remember the past but also tangible reminders of the continuation of this ethnicity into the present. Allied to Cressey's (2006) notion of the ritualisation of 'ethnic belonging' (p. 13), wherein the childhood years might often be framed by beginning and ending the year with relatives back in Ireland, and through the observance and participation in a number of catholic high points in the calendar, we begin to uncover a framework for Irish continuity built of memory, culture, and history yet physically existing 'ex patria'.

Such exhibitions, displays and performances of Irishness and Catholicism, which for many included the prominence of porcelain ornaments inscribed with 'traditional Irish proverbs' and Claddagh rings<sup>17</sup>, summers spent in Ireland, the wearing of shamrock on St Patrick's Day, serving on the altar or attending Irish dancing classes, helped to create a sense of 'home' within the home for migrant families and a sense of belonging despite their geographical displacement from Ireland. Later, I will argue that through a number of

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<sup>17</sup> Though the origin of the Claddagh ring is still debated, it is regularly attributed to the 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> Century town of Claddagh in Co. Galway. Given, often in marriage, as a token of friendship, love and loyalty.

networks, the church, work and social life and particularly through the *mise-en-scène* of the home, the developing habitus<sup>18</sup> of the second-generation emerged into a new *Heimat*.<sup>19</sup> This new *Heimat* is, however, born of attachment and belonging rather than any ideological need to exclude. Within this home, and against this *mise-en-scène* we see collective, social and personal identities being negotiated, tested and formed. Though Klein et al. (2007) appeared to separate personal from social identity performance and performance *per se* from everyday presentations of self, Edensor (2002) argues “that the dichotomy between social and individual identities is unhelpful, and rather than being understood as distinctive entities should be conceived as utterly entangled, for individual identity depends on thinking with social tools and acting in social ways, whether reflexively or unreflexively” (p. 24). Identity therefore evolves and changes through a constantly occurring flow of rehearsal and performance in both personal and social space. Furthermore, there is always a reciprocal negotiation, a contingent positionality, around the performance and its reception by others. This identity performance can be an affirmative or resistant performance depending on the audience and the individual as we will discover in our later conversations, and furthermore, it is through the engagement with an audience that collective personal performances, negotiated in response to those audiences, give substance to the notion of the social and personal identity. Reflexively or unreflexively, implicitly or explicitly, intentionally or accidentally, therefore, each presentation of ‘self’ is a performance.

Having begun to establish a case for a wider understanding and application of the term ‘performance’ to the activities of the second and third generation English-born diaspora, a further consideration must lie in the intrinsic sense of the truth and legitimacy of these performances - not only the verisimilitude but

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<sup>18</sup> A recursive embodied history, not place specific, that influences our physical and emotional responses. “A product of history (that) produces individual and collective practices – more history – in accordance with the schemes generated by history”. (Bourdieu 1992, p. 54).

<sup>19</sup> Peter Bickle defines *Heimat* as “one’s entire past experience – childhood, family ties, and relationships with friends, landscape, city or town” (Bickle 2004, p. 61)

also the authenticity of the performance through which identity can be affirmed, confirmed or undermined. For the second and subsequent generations of Irish born in England in the 1960s and 1970s, claiming an authentic sense of 'Irishness' was an important part of the process of social and self-awareness and social and personal growth. One method of evidencing this sense of Irishness and supporting claims to authenticity (however much they were subsequently challenged), was through a display of knowledge about Ireland, often surpassing those who were actually born there. Cultural, geographical, sporting, and political understanding (for example) were ways to affirm a sense of belonging to Ireland or if not being 'from' Ireland, then being 'of' Ireland. Scully (2013) describes this as "almost like a password" and surmises, "That for second generation Irish people, demonstrating knowledge of Irish localities serves to position them as authentic within a conversation with other Irish people, and has a levelling effect on the conversation serving as it does to establish mutual Irishness. (p. 158). Indeed, the 'where are you from' and 'where are your parents from' questions that Scully's interviewee identified as the first question they would ask, and which often follows an introduction in both social and professional contexts, can offer shortcuts to allegiance, empathy and affinity for individuals within many diasporic groups. This is an area I also explore further through my later conversations.

Through such performances or utterances of Irish geographical and cultural awareness, positions of authenticity on the continuum of Irishness are negotiated. The studied naturalism of the Irish born, performing from an unassailable in-group, might trump well-rehearsed but English-born evidence of Irishness, however emphatic and competent. In turn, both might deny admittance to the less well-rehearsed or less knowingly mediated English-born performances which may themselves recognise shared histories. We will also consider this in terms of the second and third-generation Irish relationship to Ireland, England and their sense of identity.



That an Irish identity is played out 4.59 million times every day in Ireland<sup>20</sup> and over 70 Million<sup>21</sup> times a day throughout the world and for multiple 'in' and 'out-groups' adds a further dimension to the nature of any emerging recognisable identity and a further complexity to the nature of any agreement on emergent and recognisable Irish identities world-wide. Edensor's (2002) conclusion that "...national identity has become detached from the nation-state, proliferates in diasporic settings far from its original home, appears in syncretic cultural forms and practices and exists in hyphenated identities". (p. 29) captures the fragmented and ever divergent nature of such identities and accepts that there can be no one agreed version of Irishness against which we all might be judged.

It is these hyphenated identities that provide an area of significant interest to me. Firstly, because this thesis is most immediately concerned with the performance of culture and the performance of identity from a marginalised, largely working-class, 'Manchester-Irish' perspective. Secondly, because it speaks of and to contemporary issues of particular relevance to the broader global diasporic milieu and its attendant problems as explicit and violent expressions of diasporic identity and belonging or rather identity and un-belonging currently appear to facilitate and motivate extreme conflict both domestically and overseas.

In the framing and defining of identity and the margins at which acceptable claims for identity are challenged, we should recognise three crucial determinants. First, that at times, these boundaries are self-imposed and imagined but nevertheless impact on claims of authenticity, identity or identification and collective agreement to such identifications. Second, that in crudely constructed hyphenated identities lies the danger of the unintended homogenisation of experience - the use of such 'inclusive' nomenclatures

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<sup>20</sup> [www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie) - population as of April 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Scully (2010) pointed to the [www.70million.org](http://www.70million.org) web site attempting to make contact with the diaspora worldwide. He concludes that the popular use of the figure most likely originated with former President Mary Robinson (He also suggests some potential disputing of the figure).

disguising the similarities and the differences between the Irish-American and the London-Irish or Manchester-Irish identities in more than the syntactical sequencing of geography over ethnicity and *vice versa*. Finally, we should recognise that the hyphen separates as much as it binds geography and ethnic origin. In acknowledging all of the above, I will seek to explore issues of identity and belonging with a range of individuals and through a consideration of individual responses to and performances of 'Irishness'. The usefulness of performance as an approach is that it recognises the contingent and flexible positioning of the subject, the subjectivity of the repertoire and the interpretation of both by an audience. In embracing speech, action and context as inseparable and yet never fixed negotiations, ideological dilemmas are posed which must themselves be negotiated and resolved.

The ecology of Irish families in Manchester will be considered through lenses of ever increasing magnification beginning with the global and national moving to the local and personal. Throughout this Brechtian 'verfremdungseffekt,' the 'making strange' of these lives and these experiences, an underlying question will be whether there is an underpinning sense of 'Irishness' that gives both focus and definition to the way in which those of Irish descent experience and represent the world around them. To consider, in effect, if there such is a thing as a second/third-generation Irish consciousness and, if so, how it might differ from individual to individual whilst still reflecting a recognizable Irishness or a legitimate claim to Irish identification. In terms of cultural and political determinants, how might it be framed, can it be characterized and what tensions might it have to negotiate? Having set the scene, Chapter four draws extensively on face-to-face interviews with second and third generation Irish born in and around Greater Manchester, and I consider the domestic landscape and the performance spaces within which identities were rehearsed and performed. Having sought out the performance and performative aspects of everyday life in this chapter, the subsequent case studies, of Terry Christian and Steve Coogan, consider if and how such manifestations of everyday 'Irishness' might be tangible in their public and private personas as well as providing the foundations for their creativity and creative outputs.

It was in my early childhood in the Catholic club on Monkgate, in York, that I first remember being asked “are you English or are you Irish?” This was a topic of conversation for my aunts and uncles about their children growing up in England in the 1970s. And yet, the idea that we were not English or not Irish was never raised so directly with me amongst non-Irish. There was perhaps an assumption on their part that, as our parents were clearly Irish and Catholic, so were we inexorably and inextricably ‘othered’. Quite how was never fully articulated, though the youthful, *almost* ‘innocent sectarianism’ I experienced during the choosing of teams for a game of street football meant that I was certainly singled out for being different. Our western liberal systems continue to allow schools to be established on the basis of religion creating division, enabling difference to be portrayed negatively rather than celebrated, and perpetuating discrimination against marginalised groups. That said, it was both in the Catholic Club in York, amongst a largely ring-fenced, self-identifying marginalised community, and on the streets of Teesside, in another, if differently skewed, ‘performance of the majority’ that identities began to be negotiated. It is a credit to those who took part in this research that what emerges is a snapshot of a number of people whose identities, though still in flux, evidence experiences, curiosities, a capacity for reflection and a generosity of spirit which, in turn, influence how they continue to perform themselves into something new.

## **Chapter 2**

### **A Nation Once Again?**

Through this thesis, I am advancing the perhaps obvious hypothesis that the imagined, created, curated and performed 'Ireland' and Irishness of the Irish in England was very different from that which could be found in Ireland. As such, this has had a profound effect on those being raised in England of Irish parents or in Irish households. As one of the primary destinations for the many hundreds of thousands of Irish migrants over the last 200 years, and as roots and families were established, England became for them, to paraphrase George Bernard Shaw, John Bull's other Ireland. For the first-generation migrant, the resulting transplantation of culture from one location to another is an understandable reaction when faced with such displacement; compelled to leave a place that wants you but does not need you, only to arrive at place that owing to post-war rebuilding projects needs you does not want you. A desire to return, is then driven by this sense of displacement, loss and un-belonging and through this territorial displacement and spiritual and physical disconnectedness you become a stranger in both lands. Subsequent generations born in England will have a complex relationship with both the land of their parents and their own place of birth presenting challenges and suggesting compromises or changes to our understanding of diasporic lives, traditionally underpinned by a need to return 'home'. This uniquely post-migrant diasporic Irishness, eschews any need for a return as such, as it implicitly acknowledges that 'home' is a difficult and disputed territory, neither here nor there.

This chapter sets out to consider Ireland's influence as a nation-state on the diaspora in England; to gain, through a performance studies approach, a clearer and more personal understanding of matters of "place, personhood, [and] cultural citizenship" (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, 1991. p. 1). It will reflect on the social, political and culturally constructed notions of home, manifestations and representations of Irishness, and the codification and commodification of diasporic activities. As a consideration of the first-generation migrants' re-

territorialisation in England this chapter will reflect Schechner's (2002) view of behaviour as the "object of study" (p. x) of performance studies in the social and political context of this 1940s, 50s and 60s generation, whilst setting the scene for a more in depth consideration in Chapter three of the second and third generation's engagement with the dominant culture in their respective domestic environments. Tensions between peer groups either side of the Irish Sea will be explored and aspects of the recurrent visibility/invisibility theme will be picked up as a precursor to a discussion of hybridity as both a 'condition' and a mechanism. The authentic and the authorial will be considered in establishing a range of legitimate 'voices' from and for the second-and third generations in England.

Contradictions proliferate in the recognition of the enduring power of the influence of the nation state on its diaspora. In 1983, Benedict Anderson<sup>22</sup> first published his now widely cited *Imagined communities* suggesting that all nations are imagined communities. Further he maintains, "In fact, all communities, larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined." (Anderson, 2016, p. 6). Does this, in fact should this, undermine straightforward geographical ascendancy in terms of determining both nature and identity and by extension problematise notions of 'home' and homeland and nation? If so, might we then ask what is a nation, who defines the nation, how is it defined, how is that definition reproduced and contested, and crucially as a result, how has the 'nation' developed and changed over time? Scully (2010) proposes, "Hegemonic discourses within Ireland as to the characteristics of the Irish diaspora will shape the claims on Irishness individuals can make..." (p. 7). Through this power dynamic it would seem that individuals outside of Ireland have no devolved authority to claim narrative agency where it speaks of an Irish identity unless sanctioned by those for whom notions of authenticity must be clearly bordered and protected. Yet, nations as imagined communities are always in flux, evolving,

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<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, Benedict Richard O'Gorman Anderson's father came from Waterford and his mother from Co. Clare and, in considering Anderson's position, one must also recognise that he too was writing from a second-generation perspective, born in China, from a wealthy Anglo/Irish background.

redrawing/opening up boundaries and reinventing themselves. Ascherson (2001) suggests, “the forces of globalisation are rendering old style geographical and physical national boundaries obsolete” (p. 10) and recognises a reduction in the power of the nation state to drive personal and social identity. Edensor (2002), on the other hand, makes a seemingly contradictory assertion:

Despite these undoubtedly powerful processes, claims that the nation state as a space of primary belonging is in decline are exaggerated. For national identity can be reconstituted in diaspora, can forge new cultural constructions of difference out of the confrontation of otherness, and not only in a recursive fashion. But still, at a practical and imaginary level, national geographies continue to predominate over other forms of spatial entity... (p. 39).

Atkinson (2007) challenges the centralising of place as a locator for identity suggesting, “an excessive focus in bounded sites of memory risks fetishizing place and space too much and obscures the wider production of social memory throughout society”. (p. 523). This is true from both the perspective of someone who sees birthplace as the only authentic signifier of identity and nationality and one who experienced the Ireland of the Irish in England during the 1970, 80s and 90s. Indeed, both can be similarly problematic. The former might seek to exclude, closing the doors as the last person boarded the boat, wrapping the flag and the nation state around those who stayed, whilst the second-generation Irish brought up on a diet of almost hyper-real nostalgia for an Ireland that never actually existed, can develop an affinity for an unreal and inauthentic place whilst contributing to the invention of another little Ireland in England. Kearney (1996) confirms the latter position by advocating, “the nation is a metaphor or imaginary subject invented to fill the void opened up by the uprooting of communities and seeking to compensate for loss” (p. 193). In either case, both fetishize Ireland as a referent for an authentic identity. Ashworth, Graham, & Tunbridge (2007) remark:

In defining such ideas of inclusion and exclusion, people call upon an affinity with places, or at least with representations of places, which in turn are used to legitimise their claims to territory.

By definition, these are representations of imaginary places, but they still constitute a powerful part of the individual and social practices that people consciously use to transform the material world into cultural and economic realms of meaningful and lived experience (p. 5).

The seemingly simple fact that we are 'here' and not 'there' may change everything or nothing with regard to an individual's dominant national and nationalist identification but it may have led to some of the perceived tensions between peer groups on either side of the Irish sea. What is needed is an evolution in our understanding of 'national identity' and our contingent personal and social identities, precisely because these descriptions are based on increasingly mobile boundaries. Alignments and displacements enacted daily in the continuing production and reception of diasporic narratives will contribute to this evolving narrative of identity. It is therefore interesting to note that the statements regarding detachment from the nation state and the proliferation of syncretic hyphenated identities, juxtaposed with claims that national geographies continue to dominate identity narratives, both contain elements of 'truth' and both viewpoints enable and recognise personal and social 'authenticity'.

Place as a proxy for, and determinant of, identity raises complex issues of bi-directional acceptance. Ashworth et al. (2007) again captures this effectively:

Places like heritage, are socially constructed... the meaning of a place is the subject of particular discourses of power... At root, the creation of national heritage in support of the concept of the nation-state led to a nationalisation of the past and to an official national culture and heritage. Place identity can thus become a means of resistance. (p.54).

O'Connor (2013) draws on Yu-Chen Li to consider the implications of the 'creation of a national heritage':

The longing for home that was commonly thought to originate in Irish-American communities was actually coming from the Irish tourism sector, moreover that it was induced by 'supplying a cultural memory that is most likely not there, in order to induce

the return of their offspring as tourists'<sup>23</sup> (p.113).

Since the 1950s, a proliferation of powerful expressions of a utopian Ireland, found in films such as *The Quiet Man* and the promotional material of Bord Fáilte, Aer Lingus and Pan Am for example, present the 'old country' as a visually alluring 'promised Ireland' (Foster, 2008, p. 156), and in the case of the tourist industry, 'a privileged, anachronistic luxury' (p. 157) designed specifically to call the diaspora home.

Much has been written about the popularity and the significance of John Ford's 1952 film *The Quiet Man*. I do not intend to revisit this in great detail, but arguably few clearer examples from this time exist, a time which on its release was witnessing another great period of emigration from Ireland, that evidences the fetishizing and mythologizing of Ireland, the land, its people and its attitudes so sharply. It provides a vision of Ireland wrought from a diasporic or perhaps to use Naficy's (2001) taxonomy, an 'exilic' perspective, to be matched only by the persuasive power of Bord Fáilte, the Irish Tourist Board's marketing machine, and mythologizes Ireland as Gibbons (1987) captured as "a primitive Eden, a rural idyll free from the pressures and constraints of the modern world" (p. 196). Ford's filmic vision embodies the trope of the 'returning Irish' and places it centre stage in the form of John Wayne, whilst the embodiment of Ireland is given full Technicolor treatment both in the lush green countryside and the fiery red hair of Mary Kate Danaher. It is interesting that there appears to be some uncertainty in and between many considerations of this film as to whether or not Thornton was born in Ireland and is returning 'home', or if he is a second-generation Irishman seeking to find his ancestral home in his mother's 'white o' morn' cottage. In either case, the mixed reception he encounters would not appear to be uncommon in the narratives of the 'returned'. The characters are exaggerated yet recognisable from stories we heard as children. There is no overt sectarian rivalry between the catholic and the protestant priest or respective communities, the IRA men,

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<sup>23</sup> See Lin, Yu-Chen. Ireland on Tour - Riverdance, the Irish Diaspora, and the Celtic Tiger. EURAMERICA, 40(1), 31-64.



though prominent in the original Maurice Walsh story, *Green Grow the Rushes*<sup>24</sup>, are down played in the film and many of the traditions, though antiquated in Thornton's eyes, are finely if comically observed. The trope of the fighting Irish is also well represented throughout as firstly the reason that Thornton has returned to Ireland, to escape the memory of his killing of another boxer in the ring, and in the extended fight sequence which carries us over the luscious fields of Mayo bringing the film towards its conclusion. As a commodity in its own right, this mythologized view of Ireland instigated by Ford and described by Thornton in the opening sequence, provides a key and memorable visual referent for many of us growing up in the England of the 1960's, 70s and 80s.

The film is not as benign as it might at first seem however. Ford, able to draw on his insider/outside perspective, romanticizing and mythologizing an imagined and imaginary Ireland, also play with notions of authenticity. Ford uses the character of Mrs Playfair, the wife of the Anglican minister to challenge the returning Thornton's claim to Irish identity. On seeing Sean Thornton's refurbished and repainted family home, Murphy (1999) describes Mrs Playfair's reaction: "In a layered moment of irony [Mrs Playfair] exclaims 'it looks just as Irish cottages should, but seldom do. And only an American would have thought of emerald green.'" (p. 202). The layers of irony are interesting here as Thornton's authenticity and legitimacy is brought into focus by the words of a character who is herself a representation of old school Anglo/Irish authority. Playfair, an Anglican not Catholic and therefore a tolerated minority group in the village herself it can be assumed, calls him 'an American'. Here, noting again that Thornton is either an Irish-born returnee or a second-generation Irish-American, she unpicks his claim to an Irish identity and to his territorial claim to the family home. She then dismantles the artificiality of Thornton's reconstruction of his mother's cottage which matches the memory of it given to him by his exiled mother, suggesting that no 'real' Irish homes look like this. Finally, in drawing attention to Thornton's choice of

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<sup>24</sup> Original publication London W & R Chambers, 1936.

colour she ridicules not only his appropriation of the colour green to symbolise his Irishness but also highlights her broader disgust with expatriate 'shamrockery'. The ultimate irony, Murphy (1999) concludes, is that the cottage "was indeed built on a Hollywood set and looks remarkably unreal, is a simulacrum, kitsch rather than the real thing" (p. 202). It appears that the notion of the Plastic Paddy may have preceded the emigrating 1980s generation by at least thirty years. Finally, this exchange also provides us with Ford's perspective on the indigenous Irish and their attitudes to the diaspora. This is simultaneously a reciprocal 'othering' in which one cannot exist without the other yet neither is fully accepting of the other. It also evidences a recognition of the low regard in which the huge population of Irish living abroad, and particularly in America, were held at the time.

What we observe in Ford's film is an ironic deconstruction of one imagined Ireland through the creation of another. This imagined and romanticised Ireland is made hyper-real through the combination of diasporic vision and technical advances of the film industry and this same vision has been manipulated and repackaged by the Irish Tourist Board as a device to drive tourism and encourage inward investment. In Ford's film, Mrs Playfair uses it as a tool to ridicule the diaspora and by extension presumably ridicules the Irish ridiculing the diaspora. A further example of Ford's layered ironic commentary occurs as Thornton forcibly drags Mary Kate Danaher across the lush green fields to hand back her dowry to Red Will her brother and an unnamed character aphoristically says, "here's a fine stick to beat the lovely lady." As a key moment in 'Irish' cinema history (and for 'Irish Cinema' read Diasporic/exilic cinema history) providing memorable sound bites and visual reference points for families growing up in Irish households in England, the film transcended its original incarnation and became an interesting example of early Diasporic creativity, being adopted, repackaged and resold to the diaspora. It was perhaps one of the building blocks of an elaborate revisioning of Ireland, the social (re)construction of heritage, in Ashworth's et al. (2007) view "the creation of national heritage in support of the concept of the nation-state" (p. 54), leading ultimately to its most recent vulgar and blatant commodification in *The Gathering* of 2013 that will be considered briefly later

in this chapter. It is ironic to consider that it would have been with such revisionist images of an Irish rural idyll that the 1950s wave of emigrants began their journeys to England seeking employment and security for themselves and their families both in England and back in Ireland. They were compelled to leave Ireland through economic necessity and felt unwelcome in both England and Ireland. Furthermore, as England was still largely viewed as the land of the oppressor, this must not have felt like a stable basis for a sustainable future.

Quite where the origins of this romanticisation of the homeland ultimately arose is now perhaps lost in the reciprocal exchange of ideas, needs, desires and despair born of a country for generations steeped in a culture of oppression, poverty and loss. Arguably, the cynical marketing of Ireland to its diaspora could not have taken root in the cultural psyche if there was not fertile ground in which it could be sown. Echoing Grewel's earlier comparison of New Delhi and Southall, Gedutis (2005) speaking of the 1950's Irish dance hall scene in Boston, USA, observes, "Many people confirmed that there was more Irish music in American dancehalls than at home [in Ireland], and some said that coming to Dudley Street [in Boston] for the first time was like taking a step back in time" (p. 57). There is however, a strong sense that the continuation of many cultural manifestations of identity such as traditional music and dance sustained by a country's diaspora led to the establishing and repackaging of these same cultural forms as strong cultural and economic indigenous Irish exports. Citing Hall (1995) and O'Allmurray (1998), Daithi Kearney's (2007) working paper *(Re) locating Irish Tradition Music: Urbanising Rural Traditions*<sup>25</sup>, suggests, "It was in London and other English cities that group-playing in public houses or the concept of the session was developed" and if any further proof were needed we might look no further than an Irish-American's re-presentation of traditional dance forms that took the world by storm at the 1994 Eurovision Song Contest held in Dublin, where Michael Flatley, a native of Chicago, introduced the world to *Riverdance*. Both these

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<sup>25</sup>[https://www.academia.edu/360847/\(Re\)locating Irish Traditional Music Urbanising Rural Traditions](https://www.academia.edu/360847/(Re)locating_Irish_Traditional_Music_Urbanising_Rural_Traditions) (retrieved 14.01.17).

relatively modern cultural signifiers of Irishness were heavily influenced by the diaspora's decision to keep alive cultural traditions as acts of community building and identity reinforcement and renewal<sup>26</sup>.

President Michael Higgins' address to the American Historical Society<sup>27</sup> acknowledges,

The Irishness that I believe is now emerging, but the possibilities of which have not yet been fully realised, is one that will be informed by the experience of the Irish abroad as much, or even to a greater extent than it will be informed by those of us who live in Ireland. Distance grants perspective and it is not accidental that so many of our most perceptive scholars choose the lens of temporary exile, and are people of Ireland at once at home and abroad. (Higgins, 2016. p. 98).

Cynically, Higgins' opinion might be seen as a confident and rhetorical 21<sup>st</sup> Century 'Post-Tiger' narrative born of a need to (re)-engage the diaspora in a time of financial need, and despite Mary Robinson's description of the "inextinguishable nature of our love and remembrance on this island for those who leave it behind" (Robinson, 1995, para 2) neither actually negate the potential financial and cultural value of the diaspora. This view, however epistemological, has taken at least 60 years to emerge. Others might argue considerably longer in terms of the on-going struggle for recognition, both at home and abroad, for Irish and those of Irish descent.

The struggle for the recognition of the diaspora may find its roots in identity tensions that exist in Ireland itself. Even when born in Ireland, and perhaps due to the relative lack of inbound cultural variation, the Irish born children of the 60s and 70s were themselves searching for a sense of self from within a

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<sup>26</sup> I am minded at this point to draw on Scully's (2010) three phases of perception of the diaspora; invisibility, suspect communities and "Riverdance revivalism" (p. 81). Here we see a reflection of the latter. I consider invisibility in broader terms through the introduction and Chapter 1 and more specifically with my interviewees in Chapter 3, where the Irish as a suspect community is also considered before being further explored in the informed performances of Terry Christian and Steve Coogan.

<sup>27</sup> Remembering and Imagining Irishness. Third Thomas Flanagan Lecture, American Irish Historical Society, New York. 1<sup>st</sup> May 2012.

relatively uncomplicated cultural context essentially bounded and arguably limited by the physical reality of being born in Ireland. Paula Murphy (2010) cites an interview with author Dermot Bolger in which he remarks,

I grew up not really part of the country that my parents were from, but not part of the city that Finglas [a Dublin suburb] had become... and so there is a sense of being between two worlds, and certainly in school, in political speeches and on television there was nothing of my world being written about so there was a sense of being a child of limbo, of living your life in a place which doesn't officially exist.<sup>28</sup> (p. 194).

Tempting though it might be to engage with the surface level irony of this reflection on in-between-ness to second-generation Irish ears, there are very serious aspects to this sense of 'internal' displacement. Bolger suggests that the youth of Ireland in the 1980s did not feel that they belonged to the old Ireland of their parents and that their parents' generation and society more widely had given them no real sense of identity. Thus, an intergenerational fragmentation occurring in Ireland where a genuine sense of dislocation *from* their own country appears to have emerged *in* their own country, contributing to an overstatement of authenticity based on location rather than history, culture and lived experience. One can therefore understand a certain sense of unease, or jealousy perhaps, when, on coming to England or meeting the English-born returning to Ireland on holiday, they encountered people who had more of a connection to (old) Ireland than those who claim authenticity by birth. These 'returners' had more of an understanding of their provenance than those who had a tangible and unbroken attachment and arguably had more of a sense of self as a result of this detachment. It is possible that this sense of unease born of a lack of a sense of historical attachment and belonging described by Bolger provides a root cause of the insult Plastic Paddy. John Horgan's 2013 Irish Post article, "*Not more Irish, or less Irish...just Irish*", captures this troubling exclusionist relationship,

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<sup>28</sup> See O'Brien 1997. The Dermot Bolger Interview, Irish Theatre Forum, 1.2 1997 <http://www.iucd.ie/irthfrm/seciss.htm> accessed 04.03.04 by Murphy.

The fact remains that those of us born outside the island of Ireland, and reared outside the island of Ireland have an experience of Irishness that is directly linked to the lives and community of a certain generation of immigrants. In that way, our Irishness becomes fragile when it has to link across generations... stresses that naturally exist between our expressions of Irishness in English accents no less, and a first generation born and bred in Ireland are intensified when that generation represents an Irishness we might struggle to recognise just as much as they struggle to recognise an Irishness we lay claim to. Neither side recognises the Irishness the other side speaks of. (para 3).

Gray (2006) reinforces this view:

Although Ireland and England have been sites of encounter between those born and brought up in Ireland and second-generation Irish, born and raised in England for some time, these encounters became more intense in the latter decades of the twentieth century. Consequently, the effects of these encounters in regulating, contesting and negotiating the boundaries of national and ethnic culture and belonging were becoming more visible. (p. 208)

This non-recognition of each other's Irishness or perhaps through recognising the fragility of each other's claim to authenticity is perhaps at the root of the tensions that gave rise to the notion of the Plastic Paddy and this is particularly heightened when on each other's territory. It is ironic to reflect that those who have been credited with inventing the disparaging term Plastic Paddy, were suffering more of lack of confidence in their identities than the second generation Irish they met in England. Or at least whose confidence in, and understanding of, their identity and status could be challenged by those that they were critiquing, despite the assurances of authenticity that come from being born in Ireland. Speaking of such Irish-born narratives of identity Mac an Ghail and Haywood (2003) observed,

Its accomplishment of itself as nationally authentic within the cultural storylines available to it depends upon its active dis-identification with the second generation which it positions as culturally recidivist, retelling 'the same old story' of nationalist Ireland to which the second generation, as non-national, is seen as making illegitimate claims... the elite workers are central to

constructing and circulating around the Irish diaspora in Britain an internal cultural script positioning the second-generation as 'not properly Irish'. (p. 391)

This clash of peers was not confined to the relationship between Irish- and English-born however. Debates concerning such claims to Irishness, identity and perceptions of authenticity resulting in the use of the dismissive Plastic Paddy 'put-down' Hickman (2005) observes came from the English too:

Ironically both English hostility when faced with the spectre of Irish identities and Irish denials of the authenticity of those same identities utilize the pejorative term 'plastic paddy' to stereotype and undermine processes 'of becoming' of Irish identities of second-generation Irish people. The message from each is that the second generation Irish are 'really English' and many of the second-generation Irish resist this. (p. 174)

If, as Liam Ryan (1990) has suggested, "Emigration is a mirror in which the Irish nation can always see its true face" (pp. 45–46), then some of those arriving attempted to distance themselves from the 'culturally recidivist' second generation in England whose views of Ireland, and in their understanding and continuation of traditional cultural expressions such as music and dance, looked and sounded too much like their parents'. Similarly, emigration provided a mirror for the host nation and the second-generation Irish found themselves ostracised and ridiculed by peer groups from both England and Ireland when attempting to identify with Ireland and the Irish.

Pattie's (2007) consideration of legitimacy and authenticity in Rock music has direct application to my continuing line of thought here:

The precise nature of authenticity... can never be defined. There is always a new crisis; therefore there is always a new idea of authenticity that takes account of the crisis and opposes it. This means that authenticity is endlessly recalibrated and reconsidered and that apparent truisms which seem unshakeable to one generation of critics and fans might be overturned when the need arises'. (Pattie, 2007. p. 6)

Pattie would therefore no doubt agree that the idea of an identifiable and

unarguable original against which all is judged and from which all is derived would be an irrelevant and impossible search. Layers of derived authenticity build to reshape, re-view and reinterpret the perceived source as something else and does so on the understanding that what we might now consider to be the 'original source' is itself a derivative. If the past is not an irrefutable source of authenticity, then what we are able to 'feel' might not be authenticity *per se*, but nevertheless a truth, a reality, what one might in a different type of essay, romantically call a soul. A soul which Morrissey, might situate somewhere between his '*Irish Blood* [and his] *English Heart*'<sup>29</sup>.

Continuing Pattie's exploration of the 'authentic', one might conclude that the notion of an authenticity and therefore an identity itself exists in a state of crisis. The continuity flow of Irish identity in England has been perpetually interrupted and recalibrated through patterns of continuing emigration creating a recursive matrix of ever-renewing Irishness. This amorphous sense of Irishness infinitely creates and recreates, and in doing so actually destroys any claim to an authenticity based on provenance, and as such we are left with not the authentic but the lived experience. This lived experience dispenses with any requirement for the "faith" or "belief" (Pattie 1999, para 17), that is required for authenticity, negates any requirement for external verification through integrity and provenance, and becomes in Dennett's (1992) terms the centre of gravity for the generation of narrative and the 'self'. To capture these problematic notions of identity negotiation and acceptance, we need look no further than Jack Charlton's legendary time at the helm of the Irish national football team of which Kearney (1996) asks:

One wonders how many of the Irish 'Irelanders' – who sought to confine the nation to those of pure extraction or adoption would have believed that by the 1994 World Cup the Irish team would be over half British-born with a centre forward called Cascarino? (p. 93).

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<sup>29</sup> *Irish Blood English Heart*, written and performed by Morrissey. From the Album: *You Are The Quarry*. Released May 2004. Produced by Jerry Finn. London, United Kingdom: Attack/Sanctuary.



In quoting from Thomas Flanagan's final novel, *The End of the Hunt*, Ireland's current President Michael Higgins (2016) encourages us to muse on this shifting reality of lived experience and the nature of Irish identity:

When we hold to our ears to the convoluted shell of the past, what we hear are our own voices. But... the voices... have been instructed by all that we know about the past, all the contradictory things that we feel about it, and all that we have imagined." Those voices he continues, "make possible for us imaginary selves, imaginary opposites, imaginary others."<sup>30</sup> (p. 101)

Murray (2014) explores the cyclical, recurrent, recursivity of memory, drawing on Marianne Hirsch's concept of "post memory" as:

...a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated. (p. 151).

Scully (2015) observes that "The collective memory of the homeland and of the migratory experience is regularly classed as an integral part of what makes a diaspora". (p. 134) Further, in consideration of the emigrant experiences of the 1950s generation, that "a transnational memory of their experiences has gradually taken hold in both England and Ireland, to the extent to which they act as a post memory that mediates discourses on current Irish emigration." (p. 134). Whilst this is undoubtedly true, it also therefore underpins discourses on diasporic identity equally in relation to the migrants themselves and their second and third generation off-spring. Where Scully and I might differ is on the extent of the impact of this migratory experience. He points out that the concept of post memory in an Irish context has been mostly used in relation to the Famine or the Troubles, proposing that "it may be stretching a point to argue that the mass emigration of the 1950s had an equally traumatic effect

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<sup>30</sup> Remembering and Imagining Irishness. Third Thomas Flanagan Lecture, American Irish Historical Society, New York. 1<sup>st</sup> May 2012.

on the collective Irish psyche” (p. 136). I argue throughout this thesis, that the shadow of 1950s emigration is the legacy of both a powerful and traumatic experience that continues to fall across families both in Ireland and overseas. Were this ‘post memory’ transference of experience and culture unfolding in a place which everyone recognised equally as ‘home’ then it could be simply accepted as the passing on of history and memory through the inter-generational aural tradition of storytelling, with all of the expected fragmentations and embellishments of a retelling. In this context, it is more a post-traumatic re-narrativisation of cultural memory retold within an evolving and problematic habitus. For those who can ‘tell the tale’ (Arrowsmith, 2000, p. 42) first hand, and as a result for many of those who hear the tale, Ireland still has a ‘nostalgic clutch’ and home is always somewhere else. Born into an environment to which no one feels they instinctively belong and within which the dominant narrative flow is retrospective and introspective rather than prospective, surely impacts on internal and external dialogic negotiations regarding identity and the positioning of your ‘self’ in society? As Bhabha (2004) presciently stated, “How fully the shadow of the nation falls on the condition of exile.” (p. 202).

And yet Flanagan’s most beautiful of images seems to capture evocatively and much more positively the continual flow of past and present, from generation to generation, circulating around an intricate shell, whispering of history and tradition, of a multitude of continuing presents and any number of possible futures. It has two further echoes for me. Firstly, it is reminiscent of Fintan O’Toole’s (1999) description of playwright Martin McDonagh’s childhood London environment:

For him there was none of the exile’s longing, none of the proper nostalgic clutch of the ould sod. There was no ‘Irish community’ just people who happened to be around the place. The childhood influences of Catholicism and nationalism wore off. And yet there was for him a crucial Ireland. It was not a place or a faith or a community or even a family... It was just a voice in the head, a way of talking. (McDonagh, 1999, p. x).

Though this description appears to almost dismiss any idea of community

impact or cultural continuity and more improbably perhaps suggests that Catholicism can wear off, this “voice in the head” might equally be imagined as all McDonagh’s childhood experiences in both London and Galway, whispering to and through him. In a sense, an audial *pentimento* in which fragments of the past interrupt and overlay each other rising up and being heard in the authorial voice of the present in his work. That this voice could be seen as *authorial* rather than necessarily *authentic* might release some of the tensions between the peer groups on either side of the Irish Sea, and be the key to helping us reach a particular position on second-generation identity construction. Through the authorial turn one writes, sings or otherwise performs oneself into existence, authenticity, on the other hand, implies a more tangible connection, a mimesis even, of the past. The authorial can draw on the past and trace a lineage from the past into an authentic present that is singular and personal – but not false - neither copied, nor adopted. Secondly, in a very literal way it reminds me of Walter’s observations on the reception of second-generation Irish voices and accents by Irish and English ears. Drawing on her own previous research, and echoing Hickman’s earlier observations on English hostility to “the spectre of Irish identities” (Hickman, 2005. P. 174), Walter (2008b) concludes,

‘Both the English and the Irish demonstrate a fear of diluting their national identities by admitting the hybridity of the second-generation Irish’<sup>31</sup>. The English try to secure the boundaries of the white nation by refusing to recognise the continuation of Irish ethnic difference beneath the veneer of an English accent. The Irish deny authenticity even to the children of its core birth population in an attempt to shore up threatened national “purity”. (in *Ife*. p. 212)

Here, the voice acts as a marker of difference to the Irish, where it is used to locate the second-generation as ‘other’, dismissing their claims to Irishness because of their accent. Conversely, it acts as a marker of similarity to the English, where it is used as an inclusive device which in turn dismisses the

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<sup>31</sup> In quote footnote – see Hickman, Morgan, Walter and Bradley, The Limitations of Whiteness and the Boundaries of Englishness: Second-generation Irish identifications and positionings in multiethnic Britain. *Ethnicities* Vol 5. Issue 2 2005 (160-182)

sense of 'otherness' the speaker lays claim to at the point they open their mouths. This has the debilitating effect of causing confusion for, and exclusion from both groups. Despite these accent problematics, the idea of finding your own voice and being able to speak, write, or sing your way into existence is the most important journey for any artist, writer or performer. It is also very much a rite of passage for many second-generation Irish children growing up in England as we will hear later from my interviewees. A particularly personal example of this would be the first time my family travelled to Ireland together. My brother had been learning a song and within minutes of being welcomed 'home' by my uncle, was encouraged to sing, heralding our arrival in Ireland.

For fame and for fortune, I wandered the earth  
And now I've returned to the land of my birth  
I've brought back my treasures but only to find  
They're less than the pleasures I first left behind

Chorus

Oh, these are my mountains, and this is my glen  
The days of my childhood I see them again  
No land ever claimed me, though far have I roamed  
For these are my mountains and I'm going home

Kind faces will meet me and welcome me in  
And oh how they'll greet me, back home again  
That night by the fireside, old songs will be sung  
At last I'll be hearing my own native tongue<sup>32</sup>

There was and is a personal truth to the singing of this song, announcing our return to a 'home' we had not previously visited. My brother was nine years old, I was 13 and I was jealous that I did not have a song to sing. Throughout

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<sup>32</sup> Lyrics James Copeland. Music Trad.

our teens and beyond we would, through our musical ability, be called upon and willingly perform songs and tunes which not only validated our individual and collective Irishness in the eyes of the older Irish generation but also for our peers and equally as importantly at the time, for ourselves. Quite what the Irish in Ireland thought about these returning ‘yanks’ singing songs of a shared ancestral homeland I did not know. Perhaps as Walsh (1999) suggested, we would “amaze the Irish relations by singing things they knew back to them, singing their culture back at them”. (p. 175). What it does reflect, is that we remember the past through performing and our ethnic provenance in this instance was established through singing. For many of the Irish abroad, remembering the past through performance was key to maintaining a strong sense of identity and a link to Ireland.

In the British Council Annual Lecture at Queens University, Belfast<sup>33</sup>, President Higgins (2016) explains,

I find it useful to begin our interrogation of stereotypes in the experience of migration. To the late Edward Said, I have attributed before, the comment that everything that is really interesting happens in the interstices. And it is perhaps in the area of migrant lives that this is perhaps most clearly demonstrated. Our social sciences have... missed, what literature has often caught, the human negotiation of the spaces between the place of origin and final destination. (p. 40).

Though for the purposes of this study I am focussing on England and specifically the Greater Manchester region, this research may not only contribute to the continuing recognition of the ‘invisible’ Irish in Britain, and not just explore, affirm or dispel preconceptions around newer hybrid hyphenated identities formed at the interstices of culture, it may also help to further define the diasporic space and the direct impact of this both on individuals and the meaning of nation and identity more broadly. Brah (1996) directly informs my thinking on this suggesting,

The diaspora space is the site where the native is as much the

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<sup>33</sup> Of Migrants and Memory. Queen’s University Belfast. 30<sup>th</sup> October 2012.

diasporian as the diasporian is the native... [where] there is traffic within cultural formations of the subordinated groups and that these journeys are not always mediated through the dominant cultures. (p. 209).

Higgins (2016) positively reinforces Brah's view stating "When the disabling stereotype is not dominant so much is possible" (p. 40). He recognizes the stereotype has been both restrictive and self-restricting. To Higgins, this proposed reciprocal relationship describes the "negotiation of the spaces between the place of origin and final destination" (p. 40) and encourages a sense of both culturally contingent and culturally interlinked 'becoming' rather than an existential (re)confirmation of discrete and fixed states of 'being'. Importantly, in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 we will see how this rebalancing of cultures and the resultant emerging confidence of the second and third-generation Irish enables personal reflection, exploration and (re) appraisal, which celebrates and condemns in almost equal measure.

Hall (1990) further reinforces these points suggesting that identities spring from a place both of belonging and un-belonging and as such recognizes equally points of similarity and difference. He proposes that, "There are at least two different ways of thinking about 'cultural identity'. The first positions 'cultural identity' in terms of one shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self' hiding inside the many other, or more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves'" (p. 223). This might reductively homogenize migrant groups and particularly their children beneath the deceptively inclusive catch-all term 'British,' effectively ignoring cultural difference and historical perspective. Hall (1990) continues,

There is, however, a second, related but different view of cultural identity. This second position recognises that, as well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant *difference* which constitute 'what we really are'; or rather - since history has intervened – 'what we have become'. We cannot speak for very long, with any exactness, about 'one experience, one identity', without acknowledging its other side - the ruptures and discontinuities which constitute, precisely, the Caribbean's 'uniqueness'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. Cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of

becoming' as well as of 'being'... identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. (p. 225)

I would therefore extend Hall's view to suggest that identities are also ways that we are positioned, and position ourselves within our current and future narratives. This version of diasporic second and third generation Irishness is fluid, accommodating and reactive, reflecting its surroundings and reflexively interpreting and responding to them. As an on-going process of becoming, "far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past" and "subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power" (Hall, 1990. p. 225), we can co-locate the present, future and indeed the past in Bhabha's 'third space', "where the negotiation of incommensurate differences creates tensions peculiar to borderline existences" (Bhabha, 2004. p. 312). Interestingly, there appears to be an Irish context for this conclusion as Kearney (2006) suggests, "For the Irish, from ancient legend to the present day, the idea of sovereignty was linked to the notion of a fifth province: a place of mind rather than of territory, a symbol rather than a *fait accompli*" (p. 11). Perhaps Kearney's fifth province of the mind, will be where we establish the locus of an individuals' identity.

This new identity framework demands flexibility, plasticity even, to enable it to withstand external pressures and more determinate ideologies. This state of being is geographically located only in the sense that the individual has to be *somewhere*. Bhabha's third space or Kearney's fifth province are embodied by the individual, commemorated in both intrinsic and extrinsic performance, and archived in a living and constantly evolving cultural memory. To take this argument to its potential extreme, this internalisation of Irishness and Irish identity, this embodied archive, activated constantly through the very act of living *is* Bhabha's third space, *is* Kearney's Fifth province and is, as we shall consider in the final three chapters, to be located in the contributors to Chapter 4 and the writing and performance of Terry Christian and Steve Coogan.

If, as part of a process of a continuing physical de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation, we acknowledge the emergence of Bhabha's 'diasporic

space' we also note, through patterns of continuing Irish emigration, a constantly renewing recursive matrix of Irish identity within this diasporic space. As the individual habitus evolves in response, we see that an internalising of identity can be the most personal and therefore powerful way in which a true sense of identity and belonging can be established and understood.

These ideas are central to this thesis. I suggest that that for each generation and each individual, the mixing of history and memory, acts of location and dislocation, feelings of longing and belonging, establishes (through re-territorialisation) both a new habitus and *Heimat* (which I will return to in a moment) unique to each individual yet evidencing an essential commonality. What subsequent interviews will reveal is that within one generation, through fierce attachment to their region and city - in this case Manchester - it has been possible for the post-modern 'rootless' habitus of the mind to become a rooted *Heimat*. Whilst the first-generation migrant may only ever see the new land as a utilitarian placement, subsequent generations, those born here, will see their emotional attachment to Ireland alongside their emotional attachment to their English region as an essential part of their new habitus and ultimately a new *Heimat*. Kearney (1996) optimistically proposed, "Where national identity may be said to appeal to an historical *past* and transnational-European identity to a projected *future*, regional identity represents a commitment to participatory democracy in the *present*" (p. 204). This I suggest, has a directly application to the second-generation's affinity with their English regional identities. It is with regret that I reminisce on Kearney's broader conclusion, "Indeed I would go further and say that a real sense of regional participation is most likely to conjoin an economic to a political Europe via a genuine sense of a cultural Europe – albeit a pluri-cultural one" (p. 204).

Blickle (2004) explains *Heimat* as "one's entire past experience – childhood, family ties, and relationships with friends, landscape, city or town" and cites its importance to understanding the term as being encapsulated

...in the dual imperatives firstly of personal experience and



secondly because of it intuitively putting into parallel structure intimate human relationships and relationships with landscapes, houses and places. In other words the spatial aspect of experience is treated like the concretization of the emotional attachment to friends. (p. 61).

Cohen's (2008) definition of diaspora which includes:

...forced or unforced dispersal from an original homeland; retention of a collective memory or myth about the ancestral home, which is idealized and to which the diasporic subject may wish to return; a distinct ethnic group consciousness and sense of solidarity with co-ethnic communities in other places, most often coupled with a troubled relationship to the host society. (p. 17)

By both measures, but excluding the problematic notion of returning 'home', the second and subsequent generations still clearly reflect diasporic characteristics, having not been assimilated, homogenized or otherwise fully integrated into or by the host nation. In conversation with the second and third generation Irish in Manchester, there emerged a genuine feeling of rootedness and a sense of settlement and contentment in Manchester. This was stronger for some than for others it must be said, but this rootedness might perhaps be best captured through understanding an internalized identity described by the term *Heimat*. This simultaneously blends, in diasporic terms, all the potential negative aspects of the dispossessed with the positive benefits of a post-national 'home', however much previous generations may have clung to this as a temporary circumstance. The idea of establishing a new *Heimat* from an evolving habitus links Hall's sense of "what we have become" or more accurately perhaps what we are becoming, to Blicke's "intimate human relationships and relationships with landscapes, houses and places". What this further acknowledges is that nation and nationhood are both of a geographical past and an embodied present.

Nations themselves recognise that these shifting boundaries are in liminal states of being, and proximal to another shift in identity, another revisioning of history and another sense of self-knowing – what we have become and what we are becoming. As boundaries become more fluid they become more open

to local interpretation and implementation which can in turn lead to physical and emotional conflict. The borders or limits of identity and identification may therefore be self-imposed but may also be tested through the recognition of the projected self by others. This negotiation, or testing through negotiation, is one approach to attributing authenticity. In concluding his consideration of the work of Safran, Sökerfeld and Chariandy, Cohen (2008) finds:

Despite their different intent, all three thinkers are a long way from the notion that a diaspora is a single, endogamous ethnic group, with a fixed origin, a uniform history, a lifestyle cut off from their fellow citizens in their places of settlement and their political aspirations wholly focused on their places of origin. (p. 15).

My experience, and that of many of my contributors to Chapter 4, would indicate that this description is certainly attributable to the second and third generations and more accurately reflected in them than in their parents. The nation, for many of my interviewees at least, exerts a significant pull on the individual but it is not a clearly bounded territory. For them, it may actually be more 'a voice in the head' which perhaps helps us further recognise that the new *Heimat* must simultaneously comprise internal and external (physical and emotional) associations, commemorations, affiliations and remembrances.

Kearney (1996) accepting that nations and nation states are in a constant state of renewal and reinvention, interprets Bhabha's idea of the nation to be "a metaphor, or imaginary subject, invented to fill the void opened up by the uprooting of communities and seeking to compensate for loss" (p. 193). By extension, this might suggest that if we consider national boundaries to be simply a consensual agreement of demarcation largely concerned with geographical limits, that nations actually only exist as and in cultural memory. As a diasporic cultural memory therefore, Ireland's borders or limits are found in the body and the mind rather than in fixed or contested geographical landscapes, and this too situates our post-nationalist dialogue within a revised understanding of *Heimat*.

If this reinforces a sense of the nation and the nation state being in and of

cultural memory could it be that *Heimat* is just as portable and actually what is earnestly recounted in song and story is an internalised and memorialised sense of history, 'truth' and identification? If so, through the activation of this now portable and highly personal archive, is it possible to establish *Heimat* through habitus between one generation arriving and the next emerging as a response to Ryan's (1990) view that assimilation for the Irish in Britain had been, "practically complete in a single generation" (p. 60) leaving them voiceless and invisible?

Kearney's (2006) post-national proposition which suggests that whilst a post-colonial analysis might concentrate on the 'othered' or exile status of the protagonists in this unfolding English/Irish binary narrative, a post-national approach might read them as building "an effective community in the midst of their new location" (p. 11). In other words, an identity formed of displacement which Ashworth et al. (2007) suggests requires a "rethinking of the relationship between cultural origin and contemporary cultural location" (p. 24), in which an older postmodern idea of rootlessness is superseded by a notion of place and identity, socially constructed by the diaspora. Perhaps this finally allows us to see the establishing of a new locus of identity, in the 5th province, in the third space, a diaspora space, as a journey via Habitus to *Heimat*.

When reduced to its core, the ability to recreate and establish a viable, acceptable and believable diasporic home is concerned ultimately with how we recognize and establish an 'I' as well as a 'we'. As Billig (1995) suggests,

There is a case for saying that nationalism is, above all, an ideology of the first-person plural. The crucial question relating to national identity is how the national 'we' is constructed, and by extension a post national 'we', and what is meant by such construction. The nation has to be conceived as an identity within its own identity. (p. 70).

An isolated 'we' established around an exclusionist agenda of narrowly defined national identity would perhaps indicate a lack of integration and therefore a dearth of interculturality and hybridity. This is also one possible negative outcome of (re)establishing *Heimat*, in which close 'pure-blood' ties

may be the effective and exclusionist binding agent rather than something more open and inclusive. Yet, as a nation-state which has only survived on the premise of departure, the diaspora is arguably more important to the continuation of the 'nation' both as an idea and as a construct than the nation itself is to the diaspora and indeed to its own longer standing resident population. RTE's 1967 film, *Emigration Is Part of Our Irishness*, captured Ireland's recurrent departure narrative. Gallagher's voiceover proclaims,

Emigration, it is a word we don't like, a cold abstract word. Better to say going over the other side, going to England... Ten years ago 60,000 went, only a third of that number this year but all those thousands mount up to one million people who left this country since it became a free nation. Poets, writers, ballad singers, all have placed this boat in our consciousness. It is part of our Irishness this movement of people. ("Emigration to London," n.d.)<sup>34</sup>.

As one critic wryly observed of the final examination of the Irish secondary school system "it is not for nothing (that it is) called the 'Leaving Certificate'<sup>35</sup>

As there are at least two points of significance to any journey, it is interesting, if understandable, that this should always be framed as a departure narrative, rather than a narrative of arrival and opportunity. We noted earlier Higgins' identification of the significance of the emigrant Irish on future iterations of Irishness. He goes on to imply that many of the diaspora are in temporary exile and yet we know that over the centuries, return has not always been possible or desirable due to new family ties. The emigrant generation of the 1980s showed a higher return rate than previous generations and perhaps ease of contact via new technology will again have a bearing one way or another on future rates of return. Atkinson (2007) may be correct in his suggestion that, "The enduring importance of a national identity constructed around core values that are deemed to be emblematic of a society and its

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<sup>34</sup> Generation emigration exhibition, see <http://www.rte.ie/archives/exhibitions/1030-emigration-once-again/139201-emigration-to-london/>

<sup>35</sup> See Irish Times. Jim Carroll June 6<sup>th</sup> 2013. <http://www.irishtimes.com/blogs/ontherecord/2013/06/06/leave-it-out-how-the-fuss-over-the-leaving-cert-masks-the-real-problems-with-our-education-system/> (retrieved 18.10.16)

peoples means that place identity still matters". (p. 63), however, as we have seen in the past, the gravitational force of Ireland remains defiantly centrifugal rather than centripetal.

As a result of this centrifugal force, hurling generation upon generation away from Ireland, we recognise that the experience of many people born in Ireland and their descendants, a number far greater than the population of Ireland at any given time, is one of exile, and ultimately acculturation if not necessarily as Ryan suggested full assimilation within a generation. Dominic Behan, Ronnie Drew and the Dubliners offered generations of Irish clear opposition to the idea of both acculturation and assimilation in the spoken word introduction to McAlpine's Fusiliers written in the early years of the 1960s stating,

T'was in the year of thirty-nine,  
when the sky was full of lead  
When Hitler was heading for Poland  
and Paddy for Holyhead....

... I come from county Kerry,  
the land of eggs and bacon  
And if you think I'll eat your fish and chips,  
then you're very much mistaken...

The point remains, that despite these on-going rallying calls for separatism, a background that many of my second and third generation Irish contributors recounted in our conversations, the trend is almost inevitably acculturation and hybridity. Amine (2009), reflecting Bhabha's singular influence over this area of study suggests, "Hybridity is not simply a fusion of two moments, but the persistent emergence of liminal third spaces, that transform, renew, and recreate different kinds (of writing) out of previous models" (p. 193). Amine here suggests that the shift is in seeing the point of hybridity not as a time or place with motion between two fixed 'others', but as a liminal third space, reinforcing Bhabha's earlier and very significant insight that for him "the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from

which the third emerges, rather hybridity is to me, the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge" (p. 193).

Echoing Higgins sentiment, Gibbons (1996) proposes "...it is only when the hybridity becomes truly reciprocal rather than hierarchical that the encounter with the culture of the colonizer ceases to be detrimental to one's development" (p. 180). This view would seem to position hybridity as a condition situated within a recognisably imperialist, hegemonic and territorialist framework echoing earlier post-colonial narratives. We should not seek to assume that the condition or application of hybridity exists in states of freedom, equality or even necessarily hard fought tolerant co-existence, and it would be a mistake to think that hybrid identities were the end result of a process rather than an evolving position responding constantly to internal and external factors. Hybridity, in its non-specificity, implies an on-going liminality wherein we are always on the brink of 'knowingness', always on the verge of becoming, but unlike van Gennep's (1961) original concept concerning culturally recognisable rites of passage, we constantly redefine our liminal thresholds on an individual basis.

Hybridity as a term seems to have been used both as a way of describing the end product of two or more cultures coming together and/or the on-going process of the coming together of cultures. A further opportunity arises from the notion of hybridity being in itself a reflective and self-reflective tool that can be used not only to interrogate the on-going dialogic process and the end product but also to self-assess as an appropriate evaluative mechanism. With echoes of Hall (1999), Ien Ang (2001) suggests,

The very condition of in-betweenness, can never be a question of simple shaking hands, of happy, harmonious merger and fusion. Hybridity is not the solution, but alerts us to the incommensurability of differences in their ultimately irreducible resistance to complete dissolution. In other words, hybridity is a heuristic device for analysing complicated entanglement. (p. 17)

This sense of 'in-betweenness' looks back almost nostalgically to a postmodern world wherein our younger selves embraced often without question, or indeed

a conscious awareness, any sense of fragmentation, globalisation, appropriation, rootlessness or liminality and we simply lived our *bricolage* lives. Accepting it as 'just the way things were'. And yet many of us knew that we were different. This dichotomy I explore further in Chapter 4. As we now try to understand this experience, Ang would offer hybridity as a way of investigating cultural *bricolage* rather than it being a label for it. However, if the lived experience is the measure of individual authenticity and vice versa, then a heuristic approach to understanding second-generation Irish identity may only serve through generalisation to oversimplify and through the homogenisation of individual experiences reduce multiple experiences to a single manageable 'problem'. Perhaps we must recognise individuals as nation-states in themselves. If, as Higgins (2016) recounted, "John McGahern once remarked that Ireland is composed not of one but of thousands of tiny republics..." (p. 87), perhaps 'everyman' is an Island after all.

Kearney (1996) recognises Foster's view of cultural hybridity wherein "the very notion of indivisible sovereignty is now being questioned and the concepts of dual allegiance and cultural diversity are surely associated."<sup>36</sup> (p. 101). Kearney further notes, "In contrast to the unfortunate history of conflating cultural and political identities Foster argues that cultural self-confidence can exist without being yoked to a determinist and ideologically redundant notion of unilaterally declared nation statehood." (p. 101). This again would seem to be more clearly and directly applicable to the second and third than the first-generation diasporan and allows us to view Bhabha's third space, as Kearney might, as a post-nationalist position.

Both the 'shadow of the nation' and the 'hegemonic discourse' are shaped firstly by a construction of the 'nation' which then perpetuates the hegemony. Both in and of its construction the nation can be, at will, inclusive or exclusive. The feeling that 'the door closed behind us as we left' is one I have heard repeatedly from my father and his contemporaries and seems to chime with

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<sup>36</sup> See in (Foster, n.d.) *Varieties of Irishness: Cultural Traditions in Northern Ireland*, 1993.

recent debates in the Irish Post<sup>37</sup> concerning the treatment of that post-war emigrant generation, more recent recognition by The Ireland Fund of Great Britain<sup>38</sup> and in particular their Forgotten Irish campaign.<sup>39</sup> The Irish Government though historically slow to recognise the plight of many of their numbers who left Ireland during the 1950s have more recently supported Irish charities and centres around the UK after decades of neglect. That the political mood in Ireland is changing with regard to the diaspora is not in doubt though the motivation at times has to be questioned. Mary McAleese's 2008 speech to the Irish Diaspora Forum held at the Global Irish Institute at University College Dublin<sup>40</sup>, perhaps reveals a more honest view:

We too seek a new unity of purpose and people among the Irish at home and abroad. Over one million people born on the island of Ireland are estimated to live abroad... when people who claim Irish descent are included, the number rises to an estimated 70 million. These figures are at once both a frightening testament to the searing legacy of forced emigration and an awesome contemporary resource from which to forge new synergies and opportunities for this still new century. (McAleese, 2008, para 5)

Scully (2010), not only questioning the estimated 70 million strong world-wide diaspora figure, also interrogates this notion of diaspora as resource and observes,

Diasporic formulations are themselves infused with power relations: [and] this may particularly be the case when the nation state of the homeland adopts the language of diaspora as its own and seeks to re-inscribe it for its own politicized ends... this is particularly salient in the Irish case where diaspora has been recast as 'resource'. (p. 40).

Once again, the Irish abroad, yet now not without agency, are rendered

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<sup>37</sup> See <http://www.irishpost.co.uk/about> 'The biggest selling national newspaper to the Irish in Britain' (recovered 03.12.2013).

<sup>38</sup> See <https://irelandfunds.org/>

<sup>39</sup> See *The Forgotten Irish* at <http://www.irelandfund.org/content/forgotten-irish-campaign> and also *The Forgotten Irish Report* of research project commissioned by The Ireland Fund of Great Britain, Mary Tilki, Louise Ryan, Alessio D'Angelo, Rosemary Sales Middlesex University, 2009.

<sup>40</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> November 2008.



invisible unless invited, powerless unless provoked. Cohen, Foster and Scully have all provided helpful commentary on the power of the nation-state to influence and galvanise its diaspora. Cohen suggests that a diaspora cannot be characterised by its fixation on the homeland for its political or indeed any future aspirations. Foster asserts the redundancy of a unilaterally declared nation state to influence allegiance and identity. Scully (2010) brings these points together observing, "Discourses of the Irish diaspora as resource...are problematic for the same reason in that they rest on the flawed assumption that the nation-state of Ireland is the primary point of reference of each individual member of the "70 million strong" Irish diaspora, ignoring the possibility of multiple allegiances". (p. 48).

Still, the provocation came and the diaspora, answering to Ireland's call, returned in their thousands during the high-profile year of *The Gathering* 2013. *The Gathering* was a year-long invitation to the Irish around the world to come 'home', initiated by the Irish Tourist Board and a celebration of all things Irish. Formal conclusions published by *The Gathering*, Ireland 2013 in December 2013 noted both the general rise of 7.3% in tourism over the first 10 months of the year and a double-digit growth from their 'key target market' the US.<sup>41</sup> This was an instrumentalist revenue driven celebration of Irishness at a time when many were themselves suffering the impact of the West's economic downturn. Amongst its other findings, the report directly attributed 250-275,000 additional overseas visitors and 170 million Euro income to *The Gathering* returnees and that the event had succeeded in "...its broad aim of engaging the people of Ireland to invite ancestral relatives and friends to attend 5000 Gatherings right across the country".<sup>42</sup> Once again, even whilst trying to engage the diaspora, political leadership in Ireland managed to distance its people through invoking nationhood and nationality based on a specific geographical identifier. This dislocation and disassociation felt by many emigrants and their children seen in and experienced by both 'The Forgotten Irish' of the 1950s emigration generation and the disenfranchised 'inauthentic' children of the diaspora, is a

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<sup>41</sup> <http://www.thegatheringireland.com/Media-Room.aspx> (retrieved 28.10.14)

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.thegatheringireland.com/Media-Room.aspx> (retrieved 28.10.14)

real and recurrent theme. Graham (1999) draws on Baudrillard to observe,

When the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning. There is a proliferation of myths of origin and signs of reality; of second-hand truth, objectivity and authenticity... there is a panic stricken production of the real and the referential, above and parallel to the panic of material production. (p. 14)

Originally, I intended to dismiss this as an attack on the 'authenticity' of the imagined Irishness of the diasporic generations and their alleged mythologizing of the land of their parents. I see, however, that it may just as easily be applied to the emergence and ring-fencing of an 'authentic' Irish national heritage promoted by the state/heritage industry as an economic (and possibly anti-colonial) imperative, and adopted by some indigenous Irish, which presents an exclusive position *vis-a-vis* the first and subsequent generations of the diaspora. It is a myth, but it has proven to be a dangerous myth, dividing generations in Ireland and beyond its shores for decades. Graham (1999) continues, "Authenticity here has ceased being a measurement of value (or even proof of true existence) and become a sign of the need for such values". (p. 14). He concludes that authenticity then becomes a "site of contestation...with Adorno identifying the authentic as a jargonised ideology travestying what it represents - and with Baudrillard seeing the authentic as evidence of a loss of, or a change in, the real" (p. 14). The invention, adoption and repackaging of authenticity for one audience has seen its legacy spread and the mythologizing effect of the rural and idyllic imaginary past has impacted greatly on a culture and country built on emigration, fragmentation and a sense of loss. Each side of the contested divide cling to their own version of a non-existent truth in personal, political and indeed national cries for recognition and validation. Returning to consider the power of the nation-state, Graham (1999) describes authenticity as

... maybe traditionally reliant on the existence of the nation as the basis for political thought to the extent that it cannot, in some of its formats, be reimagined beyond nationalism - alternatively, reviving a form of authenticity validated by the nation may be a way of resisting multi-nationalism, post nationalism and any other

contortion or disruption to the centrality of the nation as a political unit. (pp. 10-11).

In this way, a concentration on the nation's centrality to the notion of authenticity deliberately excludes rather than includes the generations of Irish descent born overseas. Graham continues, "Like nationalism, it is the genuineness of 'genuine origins' that authenticity highlights rather than the materiality of origins...and genuineness is known by its authenticity." (p. 11)

Whilst the recognition of authenticity through "genuine origins" may sound like a call for a 'pureblood' affiliation, a notion to which some might no doubt subscribe, it could more positively accommodate the sense of identification that many may feel despite their distance, culturally or geographically from the nation state. Rather than ring-fencing identity, one could argue it provides a more egalitarian and inclusive view of global citizenship that recognises the diaspora without privileging unstable geographical and geopolitical borders over the habitus and *Heimat* of the mind and body.

## **Chapter 3**

### **From Masks to Voices**

Having concluded the last chapter suggesting that a wider acceptance of Irish identification might be reached through an understanding of an authenticity based on a sense of genuine origins and/or identification rather than being geographically determined, a negative corollary of this broader determination might be found in the labelling of the diaspora as simply 'the Irish in Britain'. This reductively homogenises the mass of individual experiences suggesting one overarching experience of 'being Irish' and one overarching experience of emigration. We noted too, the last two Presidents of Ireland make the case against just such a judgement. Hall (1990) concluded that accepting where we are from, or what we have been, continues to loom large in any myth making around identity, the case was also made that we must equally recognise that where we are informs its current shape. Putting this together, there can logically be no commonly held experience of emigration, only an individual one. However collectively it is experienced, the resulting lived experience remains a personal narrative.

This chapter moves away from the nation and the national as primary influences on identity towards the role and function of the individual in the search for authenticity. We briefly revisit the complex narrative of visibility/invisibility through a consideration of masks that emigrants adopted on their arrival to England in the form of social and cultural behaviours and the ability of clothing to both disguise and reveal. In the further consideration of what constitutes 'performance' and how such performances were initiated and sustained, this chapter will reflect Schechner's view of behaviour as the "object of study" (Schechner, 2002. p. x) of performance studies. Additionally, it will set the scene for a more in depth consideration in Chapter three of the second and third generation's experiences of growing up in Irish households in Manchester in the 1960s, 70s and 80s and the rehearsal and performance opportunities this provided. From these more external affectations, we move

to consider the body as the locus of both performance and identity on the way to evidencing the emergence of the ability of the second and third-generations to confidently claim narrative agency through their creative outputs. This chapter therefore provides a theorised ethnography of performances within the social and cultural milieux of the first and second generations of the diaspora in Manchester whilst considering both internal and external sites of and drivers for performance.

Harte's consideration of autobiographical narratives has sought to dispel any suggestion that the Irish migrant experience should be, or indeed could be, viewed singularly or that it can be widely generalised and representative. Yet we will see that the masks adopted by many on their arrival in the UK perhaps reinforced existing age-old stereotypes, allowing generalised and fixed ideas about the Irish in Britain to retain currency and become further embedded. These masks performed a number of functions in terms of disguise and disclosure, attempting to live unmarked in the prevailing English context whilst identifying themselves to themselves. The popular masks and stereotypes associated with alcohol, hard manual labour, music and 'the *craic*' perhaps led to a reinforcement of the stereotype relating particularly to the working-class Irish in Britain or perhaps more accurately a stereotype for working class Irish *men* in Britain. This stereotype was clearly embraced by the emigrant labouring Irish in Britain as seen most readily perhaps in another extract from Dominic Behan's introductory monologue to his attributed 1960s song *McAlpine's Fusiliers*. Though clearly satirical the monologue and the song itself did strike a chord with the population in its reflection on the life of the Irish labourer at the time. More than this, it reminds us that despite the hardships of the times, the danger and relentlessness of the work and conditions, and the racist taunts, Paddy was here to stay.

The craic was good in Cricklewood  
And they wouldn't leave the Crown  
With glasses flying and Biddy's crying  
'Cause Paddy was going to town

Oh mother dear, I'm over here

And I'm never coming back

What keeps me here is the reek o' beer

The ladies and the craic

The rallying call for separatism in this song we identified in Chapter 2, whilst the second stanza of this introductory monologue exemplifies the dichotomy of the emigrant Irish life. An understanding that, irrespective of the politics of their arrival on these shores, and however much they will not see themselves as becoming or succumbing to English cultural mores, England had given them an opportunity to work and enjoy their hard-earned wage, and more importantly perhaps, an opportunity to reinvent themselves. However, we should remember that this reinvention occurred within small communities of displaced Irishness in a country which was still largely seen as the land of the oppressor. Higgins (2016) considers,

If identity is always complex, the issue for immigrants – and the choices required of them – are even more so. For many, it was easier to put on and wear the mask expected of them than to shape a new identity at once. Shaping a new identity took time and was itself fraught. Thomas Flanagan notes ‘the experience of many immigrant communities was a ghetto experience for the first two generations and that this was often succeeded by self-ghettoisation, or a withholding from a mainstream and official culture often seen as unwelcoming or elitist’. (p. 91)

Ireland's history would no doubt bear out this assertion but its recurrent history of emigration makes this pattern less easy to frame in such chronologically simplistic terms. Nevertheless, ghettoization largely through poverty is a recognisable feature of many immigrant stories and is reflected to an extent in the interviews that form Chapter 4 of this thesis. Beneath this mask and behind the sometimes self-erected wall of exclusion, who could know what metamorphosis was taking place, how long a new identity might need to take shape, and when and how it might emerge? The mask however, offered

multiple possibilities for the individual and a number of interpretations for the potential audiences. In his October address that same year, Higgins (2016) considered an alternative masking of self: “The late Josephine Hart, echoing Frank O’Connor’s comment that ‘an Irishman’s private life begins at Holyhead’ spoke of ‘the great gift of exile’, spoke of the liberation that it can bring”. (p. 47)

We should be careful not to equate liberation from one oppressive regime with freedom *per se* or private life removed from Ireland for a life of privacy. Nevertheless, the opportunity for reinvention is open to all migrants in the gap that exists between the past and the present and the more geographically tangible ‘over there’ and ‘over here’. Higgins’ comments reflect on the complexity of identity for migrants. On one hand, there is the suggestion of liberty and privacy equalling freedom and the possibility of reinvention, on the other, the donning of an acceptable, expected and at times required mask forcing the Irish to have ‘private lives’ because public performance was not welcome.

There was, and perhaps is still, a gendered response to the ways in which Irish emigration is viewed and experienced. Tim Pat Coogan (2002) suggests, “migration has always tended to be an enabling experience for women more so than men. It offered better prospects than that of impoverished spinsterhood on a relative’s farm, a drab bed-sit, or drudgery as a housewife trying to cater for too many children with too little money” (pp. xvi–xvii). Whilst Gray’s (2006) consideration of Coogan’s perspective confirms that much emerging literature, “largely supports” Coogan’s view and that it “identifies women’s migration as a journey into the possibilities of full personhood based on independence, individualisation and a place in the labour market” (pp. 207–208). Gray also concludes that “the premise that emigration is more enabling for Irish women than men relies upon particular normative notions of Irish culture and Irish womanhood as reproduced through heterosexual coupling” (pp. 207–208). It was not therefore a release from gendered expectations in the home but rather from the controlling power of the Church, the state and the family networks in Ireland that offered the illusion of choice and reinvention

through dislocation and new beginnings. We return to these ideas in Chapter 4 where the female perspective of both generations is visited within the experiences of my interviewees and we will hear again that, for some, this so-called 'liberation' did not necessarily mean freedom or acceptance.

The masks that many chose to wear on their arrival in the three decades following the Second World War, might have perpetuated a historical and particularly visible narrative of Irishness, however derogatory and stereotypical, that associated the Irish with drink and the '*craic*'. Kiberd (2016) suggests one reason that this might have been the case:

Perhaps emigration had elements in common with Colonialism... it removed from the homeland some of the most energetic as well as some of the least well-endowed people. In England, they were expected, as were the British out in the colonies, somehow to impersonate just the kind of average home types they manifestly would not or could not be... In the case of the Irish in Britain, a similar acting out of a national stereotype may help to explain the phenomenon, noted by Wills, of groups performing 'the life of Riley', when the reality they were living, either as efficient doctors or casual laborers (sic) was different indeed.<sup>43</sup>

Constructed for and displayed amongst the Irish themselves; learnt and adopted by the next generation, reconstructed and (re)performed to a range of audiences, performances of Irishness had visibility outside of this close and networked in-group. One can see therefore, how it might have been easier to accept the trope and adopt the mask of the 'drunken Irish' or the 'fighting Irish' for example as both an assimilationist position and a distancing technique – simultaneously providing a recognisable and known 'other' to effectively self-ghettoise, whilst clearly identifying themselves to themselves. In either case, this self-adopted, and to an extent self-fulfilling performance from behind the mask of expected 'Irishness', be its purpose as a dramatic device or a disguise, would inform and shape cultural memories and cultural performances to the present day. Such masks therefore provided a barrier behind which the Irish

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<sup>43</sup> On line review see <https://breac.nd.edu/articles/emigration-once-again/> (retrieved 17.02.2017)



could retreat and reinvent themselves and importantly contribute to a reinvention of self, nation and national identity through the next generation. Higgins (2016) recognises the need for such opportunities to be grasped:

We are now in a time which needs new myth-making, including a myth for our Irishness and I believe that this involves both the ethics of memory and the courage of imagination. What should we remember and how, what might we come to know, to imagine, dare to hope and offer to an Irishness for new times? (p. 90).

If now is the time for all generations of Irish to create their futures based on the “ethics of memory” and “courage of imagination”, then I would also agree with Higgins’ implicit suggestion that the opportunity to do so had not presented itself so clearly in the past, nor had the ability to do so been recognised and encouraged. O’Connor (2013) identifies the impact of the contextual conflicts of the differing times when she looks to Bauman’s distinction between modern and post-modern identity:

Modern identity [Bauman suggests], ...is characterised by the idea of one’s life as a journey that progressively moves towards the goals of selfhood. Postmodern identity, in contrast, describes a situation which is reflexive and in which multiple fragments of identity are constantly and opportunistically in play. These are not mutually exclusive categories but are rather tendencies. (p. 83)

As the movement of migrants to the UK in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s might be generalised by describing a shift from a largely rural Irish experience to a mostly urban UK environment, there was essentially the beginnings of a shift away from patriarchal and gender-biased environments based firmly on the perpetuation of traditional roles and providing individuals with a clearly defined set of [expectations](#), towards a more modernist and individually driven approach to social and personal identity formation. Two documentaries, *Imircigh Ban* (Dobharchú, TG4, n.d.) and *Hail Mary’s and Mini Skirts* (Puri, BBC Radio 4, n.d.), begin to capture the female perspective, however Gray’s (2006) study of Irish women migrants in the mid-1980s and 1990s showed just how slowly this shift was taking place. The second generation would, in

contrast, inform and reflect Bauman's view of a postmodern approach to identity formation in its fragmented, more reflexive and therefore knowing, hybrid and hyphenated nomenclature and in the multicultural society within which it was formed, informed and performed. This however, makes it no less an individualistic search for a personal identity.

That clothing was used in the title of the recent BBC4 documentary as a signifier of freedom and gender empowerment is no surprise, as clothing has often been directly linked to issues of identity, freedom and repression over the centuries. A brief diversion here to consider aspects of clothing and fashion will serve a useful purpose in Chapter 4, where my interviewees consider the significance of fashion as a signifier of limited cultural outlook and reductive aspiration. Huck (2003) has clearly observed that as a result of Britain's colonial relationship to Ireland over the preceding centuries the Irish were systematically robbed (literally de-robed) of their identities. The shedding of Irish woven cloth and Irish traditional style of dress was enforced by the 'civilizing' process of colonialism and a realignment of dress sense to mirror English attire was required. Huck captures the prevailing mood of the time including Edmund Spenser's late 16<sup>th</sup> Century view:

The difference between the English and the Irish is therefore only a matter of development, of proper manners and proper clothing, not one of essence and blood. And to dress the Irish properly is to cultivate them, because 'there is not a little in the garment to the fashioning of the mind'<sup>44</sup>. (pp. 275–276).

Further recognition of this is seen in the lyrics of a number of Irish songs perhaps most notably *The Wearing of the Green*. This old Irish street ballad reflected on the rebellion of 1798 and the English law which forbade the wearing of the colour green as it signified an allegiance to Ireland:

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<sup>44</sup>Note from the bibliography of Huck reads... Edmund Spenser, *A view of the present state of Ireland*. Ed. W. L. Renwick. Clarendon Press, 1970, p. 48. The text was probably composed around 1596 but not published before 1633. *Studies Review* 11:3, 272-284).

Oh Paddy dear and did you hear the truth that's going round?  
The Shamrock is forbid by law to grow on Irish ground  
St Patrick's Day no more we'll keep his colour can't be seen  
For there's a bloody Law against the wearing of the green

I met with Napper Tandy and he took me by the hand  
Saying, "how is dear old Ireland and how does she stand"  
"She's the most distressful country that you have ever seen  
For they're hanging men and women for the wearing of the green"<sup>45</sup>

Following centuries of colonial rule and in response to this forced loss of visible and tangible Irish identity in Ireland, it was suggested that a (re)emerging Irish identity should be matched or indeed underlined by the wearing of Irish materials reflective of a new Irish confidence. Two centuries later however, the idea of visibly supporting Ireland's independence from British rule through the 'Wearing of the Green' was used to ridicule the Irish American Noraid<sup>46</sup> supporters, who were rebuked in the words of Stiff Little Fingers 1991 song *Each Dollar a Bullet*:

Oh it must be so romantic when the fighting's over there  
And they're passing round the shamrock and you're all filled up with tears  
"For the love a dear old Ireland" That you've never even seen

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<sup>45</sup> Lyrics attributed to Dion Boucicault (1820-1890) and appear in iterations of his 1864 play *Arragh na Pogue*. See Grene, N., & Morash, C. (2005). *Irish Theatre on Tour*. Peter Lang. p.147-148.

<sup>46</sup> *NORAIID*, according to their website is 'an American based organization seeking through peaceful means, the establishment of a democratic 32-country Ireland' see <http://irishnorthernaid.com>. In the past *NORAIID* has been accused of fundraising to directly support the IRA.

You throw in twenty dollars and sing “Wearing of the Green”

Each Dollar a bullet, Each victim someone’s son

And Americans kill Irishmen, as surely.... as if they fired the gun<sup>47</sup>

Amongst more recent examples, Michael John Herbert (2001) charts the Manchester Irish involvement in the Nationalist movement in his book ‘The Wearing of the Green’ and Tim Pat Coogan explores Irish global migration in ‘Wherever the Green is Worn: The Story of the Irish Diaspora’ from which we have drawn already. The idea therefore, of wrapping yourself in a blanket, a flag, or any visible and recognisable manifestation of Irishness naturally has legacy issues, currency, and some agency, if not universal acceptance.

Though brief examples, the idea that dress, appropriated, adopted, indigenous, imposed or invented can reinforce cultural identity and should therefore be encouraged or denied has potency. In one sense, the British enforced a dress code to mask the uncivilized Irish; to mask their lack of manners and cultivation. As Counsell (2009) identifies,

Manners, and etiquette, deportment, vestimentary codes, the constraints of propriety and conventions for expressing sexuality, gender and power – all predate the particular act, are the realization of inherited schemes. In this sense, they constitute embodiments of memory, and a memory that is collective (p. 1).

As many of my generation will attest, you can still identify (particularly) an elderly Irishman walking along the streets of England by his “vestimentary codes”, weather beaten face, posture and slow gait. Alexis Petrides’ 2013 Guardian review of the Pogues’ 30-year anniversary reunion, quotes front man Shane McGowan describing the Pogues’ dress sense as being “equal parts

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<sup>47</sup> Stiff Little Fingers, *Flags and Emblems*. 1991. Originally released on the Castle label. Produced by The Engine Room.

Brendan Behan and typical Irish granddad". And it was often the dark suit, brown shoes, open neck white shirt, all adopted by the Pogues as a signifier of Irishness, that might have set the Irish visibly apart from their English counterparts and certainly identified them clearly to themselves. The Pogues surely adopted this attire with an insider view, to remember and reflect their parents' generation as did their early musical outputs, though these were richly underscored by lyrics and performances that reflected the more chaotic aspects of the outsider existence. That the Pogues were not immediately accepted in Ireland suggests that perhaps this was one element of repackaged Irish culture, unlike *Riverdance*, the session and the Irish Themed Pub, that some Irish were not keen to adopt. Like McDonagh, their position relative to the Irish in both England and Ireland allowed them to expose aspects of Irish history and culture, and repackage them as a grotesque. When faced with this reflection of itself, Ireland did not like what it saw. This sense of fashion/anti-fashion nevertheless acts a clear signifier of ethnicity and ethnic continuity as Counsell's (2009) brief consideration of Connerton<sup>48</sup> concludes:

For Connerton, then, even ephemeral codes of fashion can function as vehicles for cultural remembering. Apparently unregulated, born of informal social interaction, they are nevertheless capable of conveying highly nuanced conceptions of a common history... For the fashions described do not simply reflect the past, they recreate it, and effectively re-narrativise events individuals might actually have experienced. Cultural memory is not simply passed on in Connerton's account it is made afresh, bodies enacting new visions of a collective past. (p. 6).

We will return in Chapter 4 to a number of second-generation responses to the clothing signifiers of their peers and their parents in terms of cultural memory and continuity.

Having considered clothing as a powerful signifier of cultural memory that effectively re-creates and re-narrativises history and memory, and briefly

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<sup>48</sup> Also see Paul Connerton, 1989. *How Societies Remember*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

examined the masks that were adopted on arrival to England which were used to both disguise and reveal, I now wish to turn our attention to the body that employs or deploys such affectations. An October 2014 call for papers for issue 77 of *The Velvet Light Trap* proposed,

A fundamental, yet often taken for granted, premise: the body is the central locus of performance. Through movement, gesture, facial expressions, and vocalizations, the body provides the basic physical language of performance. Yet this language is neither fixed nor ideologically neutral but is instead continuously shaped and reshaped by historical and cultural pressures brought to bear on the body as contested site of identity.<sup>49</sup>

In other words, the individual as the site of an authentic identity formation and the generative site of both performance and identity. Additionally, we need to understand the relationship between the performed material i.e. the text and context of Irishness; the performance, in and of the body *qua* performance; and the audience as crucial to the reciprocal, symbiotic and on-going process of 'becoming'. Furthermore, we need to recognise how these performances may impact, reinforce or destabilise prevailing societal views and established personal and socially accepted identity formations which provide the base from which the authorial and authentic voice of the second and subsequent generations of English-born Irish can emerge.

Dierdre Heddon (2007) suggests that autobiographical performance is, or has been "a means to reveal otherwise invisible lives, to resist marginalization and objectification and to become, instead, speaking subjects with self-agency, performance, then, as a way to bring into being a self" (p. 3). Performative ethnography is, by definition, a consciously designed and delivered project to reveal the self. But what of the unconscious, accidental ethnographic

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<sup>49</sup> The Velvet Light Trap - See <https://utpress.utexas.edu/journals/the-velvet-light-trap>  
original cfp available at <https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A2=ind1410&L=FANSTUDIES&F=&S=&P=1636>

performances that we give? There is both a need to tell life-stories through performance and an inevitability that in any performance our life-stories will be found. The performance could therefore be seen as simultaneously a construction and a reconstruction of the narrative self and self-narrated self.

In addition to the proposal that autobiographical performance constructs and reconstructs the self, Lionnet and Heath (1992) claim the body as the site of authenticity, and suggests that the body has “a double function, namely to represent the real and to mediate the possible”. (p. 34). As the body is both activation and containment of the living archive, it actually has a triple function. To reconstruct the past, encapsulate the present and foreshadow the future. This moves us towards a recognition of the body as, to paraphrase Dennett (1992), the generative site of self’. Billig (1995) further emphasis this point:

The body believes in what it plays at: it weeps if it mimes grief. It does not represent what it performs, it does not memorise the past, it enacts the past, bringing it back to life. What is ‘learned by the body’ is not something that one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is. (p. 73)

In Billig’s view therefore, the past is not an intangible memory but is physical embodied reality. The body brings it to life. The body does not represent, it simply is. As we begin to understand the relationship between the past, memory and history as a physically embodied and continuous reality, we should consider Bauman’s (1999) proposal that “Ethnic identities are thus nothing more than ethnic identifications that are frozen in time. As the social climate gets colder they can go into deep freeze and harden; as the social climate gets warmer they can unfreeze and melt into new forms” (p. 21). Reflecting a contingent positionality in which expressions of identity are nuanced by external pressures and susceptible to change, Bauman continues, “Analytically speaking therefore, ethnicity is not an identity given by nature but an identification created through social action” (p. 21). Identities are therefore fluid and responsive and any attempt to capture conclusively an ethnic identity will serve merely to freeze a moment in time and provide a snapshot of the very recent past. We then begin immediately to overwrite and renew,

constantly revising and rewriting that moment in time with new experiences and new reflections. Our future selves will be different but equally the lens through which we view that past will have changed.

If the object was to completely overwrite what had gone before then the present as palimpsest might be a useful description of this self-preservation and self-invention. If, as within our own DNA, real traces of the past may be detected then the past has not been overwritten it has evolved, leaving traces of its evolution and forming a direct link from what lies beneath to what can now be most clearly seen. This evolutionary reading of a life suggests that the actions result in more of a *pentimento* than a palimpsest. *Pentimento* being a much more iterative 'human' reading in its implications for unbroken links and continuity, rather than renewal through fracture and obliteration. Of course, as Turner (1996) has made clear, life is not without its ruptures and discontinuities, but these simply layer identity construction. They may disguise but they rarely, if ever, destroy. Applied to the nature of identity, *pentimento* is identity being continually formed. Layering of identity can never wipe clean it can only obscure and a closer reading of an embodied performance as text allows us to see trace lines from the present to sites of identity formation. Through Chapters 4, 5 and 6, I will seek to determine how this intimate notion of almost spiritual yet tangible trace lines linking the present to the past may be reflected in the lives and creative outputs of the second and third generation Irish and what this may reveal about their understanding of, identification with and claim to *an* Irish identity.

Without wishing to overcomplicate these matters there are a number of influential thinkers (not least Bergson, Bourdieu, Deleuze and Proust) whose considerations of memory and identity have influenced subsequent reflections by Ricoeur, Schechner and Taylor on questions of the performance of identity and culture. I will examine a number of these perspectives individually before incorporating them into the main thrust of my argument in due course.

Jac Saorsa (2014) talks of the present being "the catalyst where choices are



made and where the future and the past interconnect” (p. 63). At the point of intersection, Soarsa chimes with the Deleuzian (2014) perspective that sees the present coexisting with the past, or indeed coexisting with itself as the past. As it would take a separate thesis to unpick Deleuze’s description of the complex interrelationship of past and present, an easier analogy might be to imagine this co-existence as our night sky, in which we see the light of distant stars - their (and our) past, in our present. This eases us towards the idea of an unfolding universe or an unfolding identity always referring to its previous iteration yet always changing shape. To visualize this notion of an unfolding identity, Deleuze imagines a piece of paper, no matter how crumpled, battered or torn it becomes, still being the same piece of paper. It takes on the impressions of its experience but in essence it is the same elements combined in the same way, just reshaped. It might never be returned to its pristine state as it is now something more. Unfolding and attempting to iron out the folds on the piece of paper clearly reveals the many points of impact that the folds have introduced and which cannot now be smoothed away into untraceability. It can never be as it once was neither can it ever be seen again as it once was. The present is therefore something always inextricably linked to, formed out of, yet different from its antecedent. This idea, I suggest, is one way in which we can view the notion of memory and history linked to identity formation. The paper retains the memory of its folding and crumpling yet remains in essence and constitutionally the same. From both the present and any future the past appears different. As we continually refocus the lens through which we engage with the past, we make and remake history and by extension make and remake identity.

Bourdieu (1992) echoing Durkheim, helps us to grasp this Deleuzian concept of unfolding identity and provides not only a rationale for a sense of identification as discussed by Bauman but also why this identification exists to greater or lesser degrees in the individual:

In each of us in differing degrees is contained the person we were yesterday and indeed, in the nature of things, it is even true that our past personae predominate in us, since the present is necessarily insignificant when compared to the long period of the

past because of which we have emerged in the form we have today. It is just that we don't directly feel the influence of these past selves precisely because they are so deeply rooted within us. They constitute the unconscious part of ourselves. Consequently, we have a strong tendency not to recognise their existence and to ignore their legitimate demands. By contrast, with the most recent acquisitions of civilisation we are vividly aware of them just because they are recent and consequently have not had time to be assimilated into our collective unconscious. (p. 56)

Through these various considerations we are beginning to present a picture of identity formation which is continuous, in which past and present simply co-exist. A more Bergsonian view considers all time as being 'past' and into which we leap in order to remember, forcing the present to instantly become the past (and vice versa) through the activation of our personal archive. Collins and Caulfield (2014) introduce a helpful visual aid suggesting, "The consideration of how memory operates in relation to historical imagination requires an alternative understanding of time as a Möbius strip that links the past to the present" (p. 6). The continuous line of past and present curving continuously between past and present rather than possessing singular linearity. Activating this embodied and archived memory can both require and provide a '*recherche du temps perdu*', in its originally translated sense of a 'remembrance of things past'. Through an interpretation of Proust via Deleuze (2014) we begin to understand his suggestion that identity may be 'real without being actual, ideal without being abstract'. (p. 208). We see what we see because of all that has gone before and all that is happening beneath the surface or, in the Möbius sense, along its surface. These 'whiffs' or 'shards' of memory are interventionist; previous versions of the self coming sharply into focus, however intermittently, through a memory invoked by some external presence – a smell, a sound, a comment. In identity terms this could provide a subliminal moment of absolute clarity which provokes a reaction in the conscious self. The reminiscences or performances which engage with these '*temps perdu*' deliberately or otherwise act as a trigger to real points of identity realisation, alignment and significance for an audience.

The notion of identity calling from the past, or shards of memory piercing the

present, continues to be further reflected in the work of Paul Ricoeur and the absolute importance of the 'audience' to the credible establishment of any sense of narrative identity is central to much of his thinking. This not only illuminates and reinforces my thinking around identity construction but also aligns it, and the performative aspect of it, within the realms of 'performance'. Pellauer and Dauenhauer (2011) summarise Ricoeur suggesting a number of key ideas that are necessary to the construction of a personal narrative, including the following three key elements. Firstly, that I have a "sense of my own identity by telling myself a story about my own life [acknowledging] ... identity is [not] like that of a fixed structure or substance... identities are mobile". Second, that "each person's individual narrative always intersects those of other personages in the narrative...[therefore] the story by which I constitute my own identity shows that my life is always linked to others, not always in the way I would prefer". Third, that "however cosmopolitan a person may become, he or she has a distinctive heritage that always matters."<sup>50</sup> Thus, Ricoeur establishes that one can claim narrative agency only whilst understanding that identity is a process and is fluid, that the audience both observes and impacts on the narrative, and that the past always underpins that narrative. Most importantly, Pellauer and Dauenhauer's (2011) Stanford entry concludes that Ricoeur's research led him to the realisation "that there is no unmediated self-understanding, and that such mediation always passes through interpretation". Here then, we see that both the incremental development and the communication of self-narrative (identity) are reciprocal and symbiotic. There is perhaps something else at work here: not only are we recursively remediating, reinterpreting and reinventing our performances of self in the space between performer and audience, but also the performer and spectator are both implicated in the performance and the ever-changing nature of both the text and context. Furthermore, that there is, between the

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<sup>50</sup> The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Entry first published 11.11.02; substantive revision Mon 18.04.11; substantive revision 03.06.16 edition cited. This extract refers to the 2011 entry. (accessed 27.02.12). For 2016 entry see <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ricoeur/>

audience and the performer, a subconscious memory of an idealised performance or amalgam of performances which we (all) aspire to, which might be as near to an 'authentic self' as we can get, and upon which a collective understanding of authenticity is based. It might certainly provide an agreed collective understanding upon which negotiations regarding authenticity may be based, confirmed or denied.

Diane Taylor (2003) states "Performances function as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity through reiterated, or what Richard Schechner has called 'twice-behaved behavior (sic).'" (p. 2). Schechner's (2006) view of restored, reorganised or 'twice-behaved behavior' can be further characterised as that which separates a traditionally framed 'performance' from 'ordinary life', or as he prefers that which separates 'is' performance from 'as' performance (pp. 28-29). Though, as Chapters 5 and 6 will usefully explore, the relationship between these types or levels of performance cannot always be effectively or even usefully disaggregated. In trying to unmask the performer we begin to understand the difficulties involved in uncoupling the recognisable performance of an actor in a recognisably theatrical performance setting, from the less immediately recognisable as performance, 'performance-of-the-everyday-and-the-ordinary'. Here we also call into question how we interrogate and understand performance spaces as much as the performance itself. The multiple characters written into existence and performed by people such as Steve Coogan and to a lesser extent Terry Christian (who I look at in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6) recognise the limitations, exigencies and possibilities of differing performance platforms. The variation can be significant, from live and as-live performances to pre-recorded film and television but all originally crafted from the diasporic performance 'stage' of 1960s, 70s and 80s Manchester.

Taylor's view gives rise to a consideration of memory as archive which is activated in performance. With such performers as referenced above one begins to imagine this archive as historical in terms of its captured Irish history, be that documented or re-membered, and performative in terms of captured

memory, whether that be recorded mechanically or re-membered by the performer and the audience. The archive becomes, through performance, both a formal and informal shared repertoire. This shared and therefore mutually embodied repertoire is also personal, sometimes subconscious and sometimes deliberate. It is transmitted through re-performance both knowingly and accidentally, revising and creating a new archive and a new repertoire with each performance and as it is viewed through a refocussed lens. Any performance will therefore re-present, reinterpret, be re-received, as it is physically re-membered. As this happens, the archive is activated, the repertoire explored, curated and finally utilised and/or exploited. In that sense, any living archive is the embodiment of memory and the embodiment of memory is our identity. This curation of the physical, the emotional, the intuitive and the intellectual within our physical bodies, is a permanent cyclical, reciprocal and symbiotic archive, informed, indeed defined, by its insistent and constant performance and reception. The understanding that exists between performer, audience and material content is dependent on the specificity of the subject matter and the ease with which the social knowledge, memory and sense of identity may be identified or read by the audience. This archive is no dormant repository, nor even a reference section into which we look to find immutable truths, but a shared living archive of what we are becoming and, in that moment, what we have become. Kershaw's (1999) critique of Schechner's ideas suggests,

Memory is the process through which performance is transmitted in time, whatever the medium for that transmission might be in space... hence the processes of recollection are the invisible component of restored behaviour. Or we might more accurately say... restored behaviour is memory made manifest. (p. 196)<sup>51</sup>

We might therefore say that performance is memory made manifest. Performances embody and reveal memory and transmit identity. Our contingent identities, in a state of development and renewal, can be conflicting

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<sup>51</sup> A synoptic explanation of restored behaviour appearing in Schechner's 2002 publication *Performance studies, An Introduction*, Routledge. (p. 28-29).

or inconsistent. They may be differently constructed, intended, presented and received. Not unsurprising given that our own performances are all similarly compromised. We should however question the role and ability of memory with all its inherent fallibility, plasticity and more positively connotative receptivity to be able to contribute reliably to any sense of an authentic identity. Some media sources have found it irresistible in terms of 'celebrity' to reveal the hidden 'reality' behind the construction, separate the bitter 'truth' from the sweet confection and deconstruct and/or undermine the celebrity they helped to create. What we are beginning to explore through the textual, critical and cultural analysis of a number of everyday and more conscious performances and articulations is the ways in which Irish identities are portrayed, when, how and by whom, how they see themselves and how we as different audiences see them. As the title of Peter Sellers' first and official biography *The Mask Behind The Mask*, (Evans, 1981) suggests, the layers of identity formation and the ambiguities of what is visible and what remains unseen, deliberately or otherwise, are many.

In consideration of the stated cultural invisibility of the Irish and particularly the second-generation Irish, Campbell (1998) notes,

In the Commission for Racial Equality's (CRE) 1996 publication *Roots of the Future: Ethnic Diversity in the Making of Britain*, for instance, the authors include an introductory chapter on the history of Irish migrants in Britain. Yet, in subsequent chapters devoted to the *contribution* of ethnic minorities to British popular culture, the input of Irish-Britons is conspicuously absent.<sup>52</sup> (p. 165)

Later in the same publication, he more pointedly argues, "Consequently, the Irish are identified and validated in terms of their *existence*, but only for their *contribution* to be rendered invisible". (p. 171). Campbell further explains in this study of second-generation Irish musicians in Britain:

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<sup>52</sup> Commission for Racial Equality; 1997 Edition (10 July 1996)

Perhaps the origins of this exclusion reside in the fact that most (of these musicians) have tended not to perform within what is considered to be an identifiably Irish traditional idiom. However, such a narrow approach to (music and ethnicity) is inherited from essentialist models of identity and it is significant that the CRE does not extend this framework to black British musicians who do not perform within recognisably black musical idioms. (p. 171)

Whilst the report does not therefore fail to recognise the outputs and impact of musicians such as Oasis, it does fail to recognise their ethnicity as being distinguishable from other white British artists and evidences a disregard for ethnicity in favour of geography as a basis for claiming talent and influence and by extension cultural identity. This is not to say that identity was, or is, not important to the audience or the performers/artists themselves. This perhaps best expressed in Noel Gallagher's famous response to being asked to write a song for the England Football Team for their Euro '96 campaign: "Over my dead body, we're Irish".<sup>53</sup> (Holohan & Tracy, 2014, p. 80) and recognizes that a multiplicity of influences impact on both the individual and their creations. More recently the issue of ethnicity and both socio- and psycho-geographical perspectives has been foregrounded by Campbell (2011) in the case of musicians of Irish descent but perhaps remains less recognized in terms of artists, performers, and writers more generally.

If formal documents are not readily recognising, let alone speaking for or to the complexity of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century individual narratives, it is apposite that we should discuss the relatively recently acquired ability to generate and publicise their and our own personal narratives in the present. Harte (2006) suggests, "The process of seizing what Edward Said calls 'the power to narrate' is an inherently political act which transforms the subject from an anonymous object of speculation into a known narrator of specific personal histories" (p. 226). He concludes, "This process of claiming narrative agency - translating oneself into a character in one's own story - is far from

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<sup>53</sup> See Holohan, C. and Tracy, T. *Masculinity and Popular Culture*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2014. Sean Campbell, *'Irish Lads' and English Rock: Musical Masculinities in the 90s*. (pp. 78-87),

straightforward, however” (p. 226). In the context of our parents’ generation, the inherent power to narrate was problematized by a lack of education, a lack of affluence and influence, political visibility and perhaps as a result, a general lack of confidence. Many of my generation do not have these as defences to fall back on with regard to their lack of a visible or audible contemporary narrative. Rather, it was the approach that Campbell identified in the 1996 Commission for Racial Equality document which effectively disguised our voices – and as Kiberd has offered, sometimes even from ourselves. In exploring a range of second generation Irish experiences that capture the social and cultural, geographical and political environment of children born in England of Irish immigrant parents, and from which the voice of the second-generation Irish emerges, we will begin to understand the motivations and achievements of the second-generation Irish in Britain. In so doing we may confirm Campbell’s (1998) conclusion that we should not necessarily,

... advocate that the cultural forms of Irish-Britons be boldly reclaimed for ‘Ould Ireland’. Instead, second-generation identity and cultural production could be usefully relocated in a contextual framework that acknowledges the particular ethnicity - as well as the specificities of class, gender and region - of Irish-Britons. (p. 172)

In other words, the emergence of familiar yet individual voices reflecting familiar yet individual contexts. The danger is, as Campbell (1998) sees it, that,

If the adoption of this framework continues to be neglected, then the masking of this contribution of Irish-Britons to British popular culture will persist, and the second generation will continue to be, in Fanon’s phrase, ‘individuals without an anchor, without a horizon, colourless, stateless, rootless—a race of angels.’ (p. 172).

Of course, we should not see this solely in terms of contribution to popular culture but more simply as a recognition that this second-generation exist at all.

In the above extract from Campbell’s 1998 article *Race of angels*, and again in his more recent book *Irish blood English heart* (2011), we see him wrestling



with the on-going problem of what to call the second-generation English born Irish. In the earlier article, he rallies against the hyphenated Anglo-Irish label awarded to Morrissey by Bracewell<sup>54</sup> and then latterly Campbell himself uses the hyphenated term 'Irish-Britons' to describe this state of being. This acknowledges that part of the problem of both political and creative 'invisibility' lay in "the fact that the second generation Irish in Britain are not even granted the privilege of a *name* - a situation which has undoubtedly maintained the masking of their identity and, consequently their cultural production" [original italic] (Campbell, 1998, p. 168). Remembering Hall's (1990) view that "identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past" (p. 225), it could also be read that the name we give to ourselves is also directly related to our continually unfolding identity. Whilst this lack of a name might have disguised the origins of the particular world views of those voices, it did not mute them and we have seen an emerging confidence in the claiming of both a literal and literary narrative voice and agency emerge over the following decades.

Fintan O'Toole's introduction to Martin McDonagh's 1999 *Inishmaan Trilogy*, equates McDonagh's fragmentation of the fantasy narrative with the fragmented 'authentic narrative' of McDonagh's own life: "The savagery of the plays may not be literal but neither is it pure invention. It comes from a vividly imagined sense of cultural confusion, from a world in which meaning and values have been shattered into odd shaped fragments". (McDonagh, 1999, p. xvii). This 'shattered' world view, MacDonagh's particular hybrid "Anglo-Irish" perspective, informs not only his view of Ireland and its own fractured identity(ies), and not only his view of how England has viewed Ireland through the centuries and vice versa, but also his own position as a London Irishman of indeterminate nationality. Reflecting on O'Toole's observations on McDonagh's childhood environment in Chapter 2, perhaps O'Toole is suggesting a broader community of influence rather than one exclusively Irish and Catholic, which extends to a wider understanding of the nature of hybridity

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<sup>54</sup> See Michael Bracewell, *England is Mine: Pop Life in Albion from Wilde to Goldie*, Harper Collins 1997.

in a multicultural habitus. However, it is also possible that O'Toole (1999) has interpreted McDonagh's position as a result of an internalised discourse, hearing the influence of the community in his head as simply "a way of talking" (p. x). The prevailing environmental, social and personal context was largely Irish and the dominant ideology was implicitly Irish. Those who were not Irish perhaps becoming ironically 'othered' on their incursion into his particular habitat and habitus. More of this inverse 'othering' will be considered through the discussions with second- and third-generation Irish in Chapter 4. Arrowsmith (2000) draws some of these strands together suggesting:

The dramatisation of uncertainty in McDonagh's drama - uncertainty of nation, name, identity - springs, as O'Toole points out, from McDonagh's 'own experience of living between two cultures'. McDonagh demonstrates the materials of second-generation identity to be the narratives which are passed down, but which are inevitably idealized, distorted, shaped by the experiences, desires, repressions of those who tell the tale. And such unreliability of memory and history delegitimizes any notion of 'authentic' identity for the second generation. Rather than a stereotypical, naive clinging to singularity and racial essence, the second-generation experience necessitates an awareness of the constructedness and hybridity of identities. McDonagh acknowledges these as the inevitabilities of identity, as legitimate and productive, and in this way points towards a sense of second-generation diasporic identity which is truly, genuinely, inauthentic. (p. 42)

That the "crucial Ireland" (O'Toole, 1999, p. x) existed in his head, further emphasises the internalisation of identity and belonging, born of displacement. Much of my thinking centres around displacement and this sense of disconnect, creating an often shifting and intangible lacuna, between 'us' and 'them', the 'there' and 'here'. Returning to earlier considerations regarding the unfolding nature of identity through time, the centrality of memory to identity and to Kershaw's (1999) notion that "memory is the process through which performance is transmitted in time" (p. 196), then perhaps this should not be considered so much a lacuna or a gap so much as a hiatus, a pause, or an interval within which identity is reviewed and recalibrate before commencing the next act. To make this fully functional as an analogy we might then be required to see identity as a series of hiatuses, back to back recalibrations and

considerations which unite the everlasting past with the perpetual present. This perspective allows us to return to our consideration of an authenticity that is able to embrace such schisms, hiatuses and ruptures initiated earlier through Turner (1996) and Pattie (2007) and I share President Higgin's attraction to what might be happening at these lacunae and/or hiatuses, where, to paraphrase Said, at the interstices of culture the most interesting things occur.

Christopher Collins' (2014) work on the *Follow* theatre group develops this notion of the hiatus and lacuna being central to memory and remembrance. In linking this directly to identity formation, calibration and consolidation he proposes,

Follow [the theatre company] suggests that in any documentary performance the truthfulness of memory as a dramaturgical object is questioned by the imagination of both the actor and the spectator. When this happens the object of memory becomes the event of memory. What critically underwrites memory as object/event is the phenomenology of forgetting, which should not be seen as absence, erasure, fear or alarm, but rather as a lacuna that productively operates in the same temporal framework as remembrance. It is only when 'time is out of joint'<sup>55</sup>. That forgetting emerges as a salutary phenomenon, because the constellation of the past in the present transforms memory into a multi directional event as the lacunae of forgetting are filled. (p. 224)

Returning to our Deleuzian notions of unfolding time, these 'lacunae of forgetting' will be filled as the archive becomes activated along our Möbius strip of continuous past and present - newly contemporised memory and identity replacing past's forgetting. For the second and third generation diaspora, these memories often begin as aural histories, stories if you will, as experiences and remembrances are passed from one generation to another.

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<sup>55</sup> The original in quote footnote references the original text - William Shakespeare, *The Oxford Shakespeare: the complete works*, eds John Jowett, William Montgomery, Gary Tayler, and Stanley Wells (oxford Clarendon Press, 2005) p. 691).

Tony Murray has explored these interstices of culture through literary portrayals of the formation and representation of migrant identities and geographies. In his consideration of O'Grady and Pyke's 1997 publication 'I Could Read the Sky', Murray identifies the confluence of narratives that contribute to the creation of the diasporic space within this particular navy narrative, including "Celtic myth, traditional ballads, and oral testimony", and further identifies the space as a place where "the narrative travels between "his (the navy's) memories, his dreams and his moments of lucid observation of the 'here and now'" (Murray, 2014. p. 49). For many second-generation Irish growing up in England the backdrop to their lives was similarly woven from myths, songs, and stories, memories, dreams and observations and with further textual complexity added by the narrative of disconnect seen earlier in MacDonagh. This could feel less like the firm building blocks of a strong hybrid identity and more like an identity interrupted or as Murray, drawing on Hirsch's concept of post-memory, might describe, a life "evacuated by the stories of the previous generation". (Murray, 2014. p. 151).

Murphy (2010) continues Kearney's theme of more flexible identities reaching beyond reductive and limiting geographical boundaries in her considerations of Dermot Bolger's 1990 play *In High Germany* suggesting,

For Bolger Irishness is not defined in ethnic, geographical, political or religious terms. Instead it is akin to what Richard Kearney calls the fifth province. He proposes that this province could be envisaged as a 'network of relations extending from local communities at home to migrant communities abroad'. (p. 197)<sup>56</sup>

If this network has no tangible location, not being defined in geographical terms, no ideological political or religious determinants, and no clear exclusionist ethnic principle then here again we are able to consider the beginnings of a new personal *Heimat*, connecting all that has gone before with all that is, and sited in the individual.

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<sup>56</sup> See (Kearney, 1996, p. 100).

*In High Germany* follows the journey of an Irish football fan to the finals of the European Championships alongside his own planned emigration from Ireland to Germany. Contemplating his situation, the play's only character, Eoin, says,

I thought of my uncles and my aunts scattered through England and the United States, of every generation culled and shipped off by beef on the hoof<sup>57</sup>. And suddenly it seemed they had found a voice at last, that the Houghtons and the McCarthys were playing for all those generations written out of history. And I knew that they were playing for my children to come too, for Shane's and Mick's who would grow up with foreign accents and Irish faces bewildered by their fathers' lives. (Bolger, 2000, p. 97)

This seemingly contradictory, melancholic, yet revivifying awakening, neatly captures the reflections of Bolger's recently emigrated character Eoin, on his journey from Ireland to Germany in 1990. Murphy (2010) suggests that Eoin's realisation, gives voice to the "reclamation of those unaccounted for in the imaginary Ireland of the past". (p. 197) Eoin understands that his children can have a legitimate claim to an Irish identity and that, in time, they will not only be confident enough to claim narrative agency for themselves but also for the generations that preceded them.

This literary awakening sees its realisation in the lyrics and performances of London Irish group The Bible Code Sundays and their confident diasporic narratives which ascribe particular geographical significance to their identity. This London based group's 2007 song *Maybe it's because I'm an Irish Londoner*<sup>58</sup>, does not appear to evidence any sense of difficulty in constructing their identities or necessarily exhibit any in-betweenness or faltering liminality, eschewing any obvious sense of identity crisis and speaking openly of a pride in personal duopoly.

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<sup>57</sup> "By beef on the hoof" is not a phrase I am familiar with but occurs in all sources I have visited.

<sup>58</sup> Track 1, *Boots or no Boots*.

When it comes to saying who you are it's all about the Blood  
When it comes to where you're from then don't forget  
your neighbourhood  
The streets and churches and the pubs in where you stood [sic]  
With your proud London Irish boys

#### Chorus

Maybe it's because I'm an Irish Londoner,  
that makes me what I am  
You can hear it in my accent when I talk,  
I'm a proud London Irishman"

(Biblecode Sundays, 2008)

Introductory notes on the Bible Code Sundays' website categorise the song as,

A statement of pride in being from London of Irish descent. No matter where in Ireland your heritage lies there's a pride in being from your hometown. The traditions and feelings run deep in the Irish communities around the UK this fact should be celebrated, although too often it is dismissed by the Irish-born Irish"<sup>59</sup>.

There is anger for sure, but it is directed at those who oppressed their parents' generation and the Irish-born who undermine the English-born's legitimate claims to Irishness. Moreover, there is a clearly proclaimed pride in recognizing the new identity which has emerged from beneath the shadow of emigration. A second song, *Kids form the City of Nowhere*, evidences this claim.

We're the kids from the city of nowhere  
The forgotten children of the Irish Race

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<sup>59</sup> <http://biblecodesundays.weblinc.co.uk/#/boots-or-no-boots-lyrics/4538960849> (accessed 02.10.14).

We built the roads and the docks and the railways  
There's nothing but pride on this West London Irish face<sup>60</sup>

(Biblecode Sundays, 2008)

There is a simple and direct clarity to the strong claim for Irishness here that understands the temporal and geographical reality of being second generation and the corporeal reality of having an “Irish face” allied to a fierce pride in being from London. This also echoes Eoin’s realisation in Bolger’s *In High Germany* that the “Irish faces” of his children will be recognisable as Irish. There is no sense, in either Bolger or Bible Code Sundays, that a white unaccented body will go unrecognised in either Germany or England. This second-generation experience, proclaimed with a confidence, passion and a pride in its authentic dualism might still experience a small test when visiting Ireland however, where on arrival you will be greeted by the extended family and welcomed ‘home’.

The transparency of the Bible Code Sundays makes for an easier reading of their particular situation, continuing to reinforce the now recognisable and accepted London-Irish identity first loudly introduced by The Pogues. The songs of The Bible Code Sundays, offer further evidence of this sense of fierce pride that is found in being from London, and equally Birmingham, Manchester and maybe even Teesside, but specifically and deliberately not England, and which sits comfortably alongside a similarly fierce pride in being of Irish descent. We can differentiate between those who use common Irish tropes to enact and evidence their Irish heritage and embrace and ‘own’ their ethnicity and those who, though entrenched and embedded in Irish history and culture from birth, choose other forms of expression. For examples of the former, I look to the Bible Code Sundays, early Pogues and, in Chapter 5, Terry Christian’s reinvention as a stand-up comedian, and for the latter towards

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<sup>60</sup> Track 8. *Boots or no Boots*.

Campbell's work on second-generation Irish musicians and in my Chapter 6 an overview of Steve Coogan's work. In either context, the outputs clearly comment on Englishness and Irishness and, through created intermediaries, themselves. Ultimately, any differentiation may be an unnecessary distinction once we are able, through these various performances of embodied history and memory, to frame individual, yet collectively recognizable, authentic identities. For the second and third-generation Irish in England with a new-found confidence in their identity, this is not necessarily seen as living in a liminal space or some interstitial locality, it is quite simply how it is. It reminds us that we should see authenticity based not on provenance but on the lived experience and that this lived experience, for those second-generation English-born Irish, involves on-going dialogue and negotiation, both internal and external that drives a sense of self with a recognition that the true diasporic space of the second and third generation might be found within ourselves. As an active archive of all that we have personally experienced and much that we have not, the diasporic space becomes internalised, embodied and remembered. It is not fixed geographically, though it is temporally and corporeally located in the body. It is spiritual and ethereal. This asks us to question not only how we inhabit the physical post-colonial third space of John Bull's Other Ireland – the diasporic communities of England, but also how this third space concurrently 'produces' or 'hosts' the second and subsequent generations of Irish or whether it actually 'is' the MacDonaghs, the Coogans, and the Christians. I propose that third space does not just 'enable' in Bhabha's terms, it does not merely contribute or even solely produce; the third space is for each of us a unique, embodied space.

Bourdieu (1992) captures this sense of body, identity and self, when he declares, "*The Habitus*, embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product" (p. 56). In this sense, the body is the history, the history is the memory embodied, and the body is the active presence of all that has gone before and all that is to come. We acknowledge connectivity to a past which is also the living present. In this space, we can consider that the past and the present are one and as such neither can continue, however they are shaped,



reshaped and interpreted, without the other whispering of history and tradition, speaking of a multitude of continuing presents and any number of possible futures. We previously noted Schiefflin's view that, "The central issue of performativity, whether in ritual performance, theatrical entertainment or the social articulation of ordinary human situations, is the imaginative creation of a human world". (Schiefflin, 1998. p. 205). Moving from a dependency on history and (post) memory, the diasporic generations with an emerging confidence in themselves and their place relative to society have claimed an agency lost to too many of their predecessors, complete with strong ties to both the historical and the contemporary 'home' and continue the process of imaginatively creating their identities and their 'human world'. Interestingly, we have moved from seeing this as a legitimate identity based on the 'genuineness of origins' that we considered in Chapter 2, to it being an identity which Arrowsmith (2000) identifies as, "truly, genuinely, inauthentic". (p. 42).

## **Chapter 4**

### **Intimacy and Distance**

The more one is able to leave one's cultural home, the more easily is one able to judge it, and the whole world as well, with the spiritual detachment and generosity necessary for true vision. The more easily, too, does one assess oneself and alien cultures with the same combination of intimacy and distance. (Said, 2003, p. 259)

A number of studies of Irish identity and particularly second-generation Irish identity have considered within their scope urban centres including London, Coventry, Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester. Others have included less densely populated areas of the country such as Milton Keynes and Oxford. Amongst these studies can be found important considerations of traditional performance aspects of Irish culture, for example music and dance (Leonard, 2005), whilst others investigated the underreported female emigrant experience (Walter, 2004; Gray 2006). Some looked at the more performative aspects of diasporic visibility/invisibility such as participation in St Patrick's Day celebrations (Munt, 2008; Scully, 2010; Walter 2008a), and others considered the English accent within the context of contested identities, cultural dislocation and continuity (see Walter in Ife, 2008b). As my interest lies in my adoptive home of Manchester, my approach has been to investigate a specifically Mancunian context for the consideration of second and third generation Irish identities, situating the broad spectrum of activity, simply the lived experience, within a context of performance and performativity. The theoretical and philosophical position considered in the first three chapters now underpins a fuller consideration of both quotidian and more traditional performance modes and stages within which cultural identity may be consciously or unconsciously, yet nevertheless authoritatively, displayed.

To begin the process of identifying potential contributors I contacted a number of Irish Centres in the Greater Manchester area as a likely focal point for

community activity and, I naïvely thought, mass recruitment. To stimulate interest, I gave a presentation of my research topic and initial ideas at the Warrington Irish Club on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2015. The event was publicised to affiliated Irish club and around 25 people attended. Disappointingly, from the perspective of generating contacts to interview, most attendees were not directly relevant to my proposed project as they were first generation Irish-born migrants. Although there were a small number of second-generation Irish attendees and one did agree to take part we were not able to find a mutually suitable time to meet. Having prepared and delivered a presentation at one Irish centre, met with and discussed my proposed thesis on a number of separate occasions with two other Irish centres and a number of representatives of these three institutions, I was still finding it difficult to secure contributors. It was to be later in the research process, and despite the autoethnographic approach to taken, that it became apparent that I could or should draw on my own contacts to engage in this study.

Between May 2015 and December 2015, interviews were undertaken with a total of seventeen participants. Ten of the contributors were female and the remaining seven male. Most participants were chosen based on a simple profile of being second-generation Irish, following the selection criteria of the Irish 2 Project<sup>61</sup>, that is first-generation born in England to one or more Irish parents. In this case, an additional essential component was that they had been raised in Manchester/Greater Manchester. An unanticipated issue arose during the research period which confirmed that one of my intended case studies, Steve Coogan, was actually not second-generation Irish, as had been proposed by the scholar and journalist David McWilliams<sup>62</sup>, but actually third-generation Irish. This revelation came as a surprise to a number of people including close friends of Coogan who had assumed, based on their long-standing relationship with the Coogan family, that his mother was Irish-born

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<sup>61</sup> Irish 2 Project. ESRC funded project. The Second-Generation Irish: A Hidden Population in Multi-Ethnic Britain. (2000-2002). Grant reference R000238367.

<sup>62</sup> See <http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/marchofthehibrits>. Published 30.06.07. Prospect Magazine.

and his father of Irish descent. Although this places Coogan and his family a step further removed from Ireland in one sense, in another it raises interesting questions about how this tacit misunderstanding could occur and places further emphasis on the nature of his third-generation experience. As a result, the interviews expanded to include another third-generation Irish contributor. The limited sample of only two third-generation contributors was nevertheless most interesting not least in that they both described different experiences of 'Irishness' growing up. One with a less domestically embedded sense of Irishness becoming an internationally recognised performer and teacher of Irish music, whilst the other, Coogan, with a more open engagement with Irish history and politics, less easy to categorise *vis a vis* explicit expressions of Irishness in his work.

In total, over 15 hours of discursive material with 17 contributors ranging in age at the time from 27 to 62 years was recorded. (Appendix A). These interviews richly illuminated my understanding of the material and celebrates in many ways the personal narratives of those brought up as part of this unfolding migrant story. Importantly, this contributes not only to my unfolding sense of 'self' within this auto-ethnographically framed thesis, but also to the documenting of Irish identities in Manchester and begins to suggest an alternative reading of Steve Coogan's work in particular. It also has wider application to performances of Irishness and performances of diasporic identity more broadly.

In securing my 17 contributors, a number of conversations and interviews introduced me to further contacts, including a brother and sister who I interviewed together, and a slightly chaotic interview (certainly in terms of transcribing the discussion) with four sisters. This experience of a conversation which then generated further potential interviewees was prevalent in three of my seven initial contacts and may suggest a level of networking and close contact that exists amongst this generation. This approach in itself is perhaps worth pausing to consider for two reasons. Instrumentally, that in needing to expand quickly a pool of potential contributors, it is a useful way to generate further contacts. Many of the

second-generation Irish that I have spoken to still retain a non-exclusive group of close friends from school and university days, work and leisure activities, many of whom are themselves second and third-generation Irish. Second, the importance of the sense of the legitimacy and ‘authenticity’ of the interviewer. Clearly positioning yourself from the outset as being of a similar background and being interested in investigating this subject because these individual and collective experiences *matter*, may have helped gain access and be a persuasive factor in securing agreement to take part. Importantly, during discussions, certain levels of ‘common understanding’ may be taken for granted, with the mutual familiarity of the terrain providing a level of ‘security’ from within which a number of interesting revelations are made. Halilovich considers the intricacies of such interviewer positionality suggesting that,

methodological shifts have made the collective categories ‘us’ and ‘them’ – as well as the divide between the researchers and the researched – if not completely obsolete then very fluid and hard to fix and define, while ethnographers are challenged to find and (re)define their own *emic* and *etic* perspectives. (In Voloder & Kirpitchenko, 2016. p. 88).

Quoting Reed-Danahay (1997), Halilovich indicates that some researchers, “have produced ethnographies of the ‘self’, or autoethnographies – ‘forms of self-narrative that places the self within a social context’” (In Voloder & Kirpitchenko 2016. p. 88).

He continues,

Being a ‘cultural insider’ had definitely been an advantage in understanding the issues and gaining access to prospective participants and establishing trusting relationships. At times, the insider status provided me with access to information that might have been off limits to outside researchers.

De Andrade (2000) confirms this reasoning recognising that, “their [the interviewees] assessment of my group membership or insider status appeared to include an assumption that I shared their knowledge and experience. This eased our transition into the more sensitive, intimate topic of racial and ethnic

identity.” (p. 275). I too found this to be the case perhaps most obviously in the testimonies regarding familial connections to the ‘old IRA’ and the continuation of English/Irish hostilities irrespective of the humorous retelling. Halilovich’s conclusion interestingly notes the continuing shift in positionality of the interviewee suggesting that the

researchers’ emic/etic position is rarely fixed and stable. Insideriness may be taken for granted when researchers conduct research with fellow co-ethnics and people from a similar sociocultural background, but the experience in the field often challenges any preconceived ideas about when, how and to what extent any researcher is able to claim or sustain a purely insider’s or emic perspective”. (In Voloder & Kirpitchenko, 2016. p. 100).

I did experience this on rare occasions when a particular comment stood out as distinct from the majority of other responses or indeed when my preconceptions about who I was interviewing and why were challenged. Most memorably this occurred when confronted with a clearly English identification from my contributors as my research had tacitly set out to engage with self-identifying Irish Mancunians. De Andrade has also raised concerns over this emic/etic positionality in relation to her research with the Cape Verdean American community in New England. She was particularly interested in the way that her own Cape Verdean identity was examined and potentially integrated into or impacted on the emerging shared narrative both by her and her contributors. Having positioned myself clearly within the frame of reference in order to gain trust and encourage participation only one of my contributors seemed remotely interested in probing my particular Irishness or my personal response to the same questions that they were being asked but there was clearly an acceptance that we all ‘knew what we are talking about’. In my fieldwork, this appeared to clarify rather than cloud the relationship and the resulting testimonies and reveal lives and perspectives of complexity.

Holstein and Gubrium (1999) consider the active role of the interviewer in fieldwork suggesting that “meaning...is actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter. Respondents are not so much

repositories of knowledge – treasuries of information awaiting excavation, so to speak – as they are constructors of knowledge in collaboration with interviewers”. (p. 106). De Andrade again offers an interesting perspective on this claiming,

Through them, [the interviewees] I understood that insider status is not simply granted or achieved. It is created through an ongoing process of evaluation that is dependent on the performance of group membership by researchers and participants at multiple levels (De Andrade, 2000. p. 283)

Importantly, she notes that not only is this dependent on the “performance of group membership” but that,

As participants in my research made it clear that there was more to being Cape Verdean than *looking* or assembling simple signifiers [of identity], they highlighted the depth and range of meanings associated with race and ethnicity. To them race and ethnicity was not simply presented, but performed or accomplished. (De Andrade 2000. p. 283)

Della Pollack further considers the collaborative interview process wherein the relationship between the researcher and the researched have shifted, seeing it as “reconfiguring long-standing subject-object relations as co-performative” (Pollack, 2006. p. 325). If we understand these conversations as co-constructions of knowledge, collaborative performances if you will, then having established the theoretical framework in the opening chapters, and precisely because of the performative response to the theory explored in those opening chapters, this chapter begins to ‘perform’ the thesis through the process of remembering. An example in itself of performance ethnography. Throughout the chapter I am able to draw attention to similarity and difference in experience where this is of interest and where it may support or contradict some current orthodoxies in terms of diasporic identity formation and performance. Individual and specific observations can be made concerning the experiences recounted and there is sufficient cross over of in testimony to highlight a commonality if not a uniformity of experience. Whilst it was not intended that this thesis should be presented exclusively as autoethnographic

'me-search', there is no doubt that in the commonality of experience uncovered in conversation, I have been able to consider my own position in relation to second and third generation Irishness in England.

All potential contributors were contacted initially by phone or if contact details were passed on only as an email I would make first contact by email. The phone conversations were often quite short, 10 minutes or so, to establish contact, outline where I worked and my area of study. Occasionally I would introduce biographical details to enhance their initial understanding of the project and to substantiate and validate my interest in discussing formative stages of their lives with them. For example, I might indicate that I was Irish descent myself and that as I had made Manchester my adopted home over the last 28 years, I was interested in comparing my experiences of growing up in an Irish family in a small town in the North East of England with a more urban, city experience. With others, some of whom I interestingly did not ultimately commit to an interview, I drew on my own musical background playing in bands in Manchester to identify mutual friends and musical collaborators in an attempt to establish trust and familiarity.

As brief telephone contact and more formal emails preceded any face to face contact, I had not built up a strong relationship with interviewees that were unknown prior to the interviews taking place. It was important to me therefore that emails were relatively comprehensive, open and honest in terms of the topic areas that I was interested in discussing though the actual questions were not disclosed. (see Appendix B for an example approach email, Appendix C for the topic areas and question prompts used as a guide to discussion and Appendix D for exemplar consent form). This was not to prevent preparation taking place, it was important to an extent that contributors did have time to think around their past experiences broadly in advance without trying to devise and rehearse answers to pre-set questions that they thought I might want to record. I was keen not to try to influence answers during our discussions and so limited my personal interjections despite the obvious points of shared experience. Such interjections would, more often than not, be framed in terms of what I had read rather than what I had



personally experienced but at times it was useful to remind people that there were common reference points emerging and that in turn helped them to continue their train of thought. The fact remains that it was clear that I wasn't merely a disinterested researcher but was deeply and personally, empirically and experientially involved in the subject matter which meant that we could quickly move beyond surface introductions to recounting details and stories to illuminate the research.

For structural purposes the interview format used three broad categories all of which overlapped. At its most reductive, a consideration of the past, the present and the future but with a particular concentration on the childhood experiences that influenced their subsequent behaviour and attitudes. These fixed notions of time however, as we have discussed, having little place in the fluid, dynamic and ecological environment within which identity is formed and performed. A sense of continuity was reflected in the responses to the questions which inevitably drew extensively on the past to frame the present and the future. The conversations used a semi-structured interview format with open questions drawing on my own personal experiences and in response to considerations formulated during the earlier phase. These interviews were intended to last one hour and most fell on or just over this time frame. The questions were designed to capture both the background context and *mise-en-scène* i.e. the place, time and habitat, which influenced the developing social and personal identities of my interviewees. In doing so, we explored and evidenced the theoretical positioning developed in the preceding chapters gaining an understanding of the environment and ecology, essential in the construction of both the social and the individual identity, their interrelationship and interdependency. Importantly, the discussions needed to provide the basis for a consideration of various performances of Irishness and stages for performances of Irishness occurring throughout the contributors' lives. The first section of this chapter looks at childhood experiences and allows insight into the locations of performance including the home, church, school, pubs, clubs and the streets in which they grew up. Insight is also gained into the curation of the domestic space as *mise-en-scène*, within which the unfolding drama of Irish continuity was, and perhaps still is, being staged.

The second section though on the surface interrogating feelings and perceptions rather than locations, returns to various sites of performance and encounters with performance through the stories that my contributors told, and were themselves told. These illuminate their particular feelings and as such we engineer the activation of the diasporic archive to remember and narrativise their experiences. Moving into the third section, I investigate my contributors' relationship to Ireland, through their memories of Ireland as a physical site of performance. Consideration is also given to the passing on of experience, allegiance and identification to their children and their children's engagement with notions of Irishness. Finally, I encourage my contributors to characterise a sense of 'Irishness', which is, as one might imagine, both elusive and illuminating.

By way of introduction to the discussion, I told my contributors in person that I was most interested in their particular experiences of growing up in Irish households in Manchester. I was keen to point out that there were no 'right answers' and that through any commonalty and difference encountered I would be able to offer a picture of Manchester in the 1960s, 70s and 80s that may not have been captured before and certainly not from their particular perspective. Anonymity was discussed and although none requested it some of the interview data has been altered to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants as required. I then began each interview by asking my contributors to tell me a little about their parents, where their parents were from and how they met and, if they were born in Ireland, what were the circumstances of their coming to live in Manchester. Of the seventeen people interviewed fifteen were second generation Irish (i.e. English born) fourteen had parents who were both born in Ireland, one whose mother was Irish but whose father was born in England (and from an English family), and two third-generation interviewees one of whose maternal grandparents were both Irish born but Paternal Grandparents English (though she thought her paternal Great Grandparents were possibly Irish), and one whose maternal grandparents were both Irish born and of whose Paternal Grandparents one was Irish born. The occupations of my interviewees' parents included drivers on construction sites, builders, trainee nurses, cleaners, publicans, gardeners,

engineers and teachers. It is perhaps worth noting that the two interviewees whose parents held more professional occupations, teachers and engineers, both were third generation Irish. (The occupations of my interviewees can be found in Appendix A). Interestingly, all of my contributors had a very clear and detailed knowledge of where both parents had been born, the circumstances of their arrival in England, whether or not their parents had met in Ireland or England and what had drawn them to settle in Manchester. These rich, evocative and personal memories do not form part of this thesis but as a record, and potentially part of a separate study in itself, contributes to the history of Irish migratory experience.

As the preamble to the interview had begun with a concentration on their parents and how they had arrived in Manchester, the discussion itself naturally tended to begin with a consideration of the particular area of Manchester/Greater Manchester to which they had relocated - the streets and the people in their neighbourhood - and whether or not that could be considered an influential factor in their early identity recognition and development. We then turned to focus on the immediate household environment itself. Other site-specific areas of rehearsal and performance were then pursued including the church, school, pubs and clubs, sometimes the work environment and of course Ireland itself. Throughout the chapter each of these sites of identity performance will be explored to varying degrees. The nature of the responses and the interconnectedness of the themes means that it was not helpful to corral these into separately headed sections, for example religion permeates home, school and church; music and traditional performances infuse stories of Ireland, Irish clubs and the home, storytelling underpins home, work and social life. Attempts to do so indeed worked against the juxtapositions that, to my mind, make the material so rich and performative. The size of the interview cohort also adds to the richness of the material allowing space within the chapter for the reader to begin to form more of a relationship with the contributors than might be commonly be gained through a larger and more quantitative study. The quotes have been left deliberately long in places in order to capture the thought processes as they emerged in conversation and for a more informed sense of each individual be

established. This may seem at odds with a more traditional discourse analysis found within the social sciences which rightly guards against a number of potential pitfalls including “under-analysis through over quotation” or “under-analysis through isolated quotation” (Antaki, Billig, Edwards, & Potter, 2003), but the way in which the voices then conjoin, collocate and juxtapose themes of the lived experience help the reader to create meaning and to visualise the world as it is being recreated in conversation. As a result, and in reflecting the grounded theory approach of Glaser and Strauss, I have made a deliberate attempt to let the performances ‘in and of’ the interviews to speak directly to the audience rather than positioning them at this stage as strategic ‘isolated quotation’ in response to preconceived theoretical positioning. I have deliberately tried to avoid undue restating of ideas attempting to embed the detail, tone and spirit of the theoretical autoethnographic perspective in the chapter. As more in depth consideration of the theoretical position established in the opening chapters is provided through the detail and focus of the later case studies of Christian and Coogan, a ‘lighter touch’ reflection is provided here alongside relevant interview extracts. This approach maintains a flow to this chapter which allows the reader to engage in “sympathetic participation” (Schechner, 2002. p. x) and allows the contributors to begin to re-member and perform the thesis.

This chapter seeks out the performances and the performative aspects of everyday, quotidian activity in the domestic context of second- and third-generation Irish life as lived in Manchester at the time, whilst the subsequent case studies seek to identify the quotidian and everyday Irishness in the more studied and constructed performances of Terry Christian and Steve Coogan. We will consider these issues with reference to the detail of the interviews, the *mise-en-scène* of the Irish home and the Irish ‘community’ and the tangible structures within which performances of Irishness were formed, informed and performed be these in England or Ireland, and what impact this has had and may have on the continuation of diasporic Irish culture and identity.

The cultural activities of the Irish in post-war England were performative. Made visible in their dress sense, their often inevitable gravitation towards

certain occupations, and the centrality of the pub or the social club and the church. Taken together these present a relatively safe if isolated diasporic space. If the Irish working class community was seen as insular (as indeed many of my contributors will suggest) the external displays of history, religion, culture and class (in other words displays of remembering) both from the first-generation migrant and their offspring, provided ritualistic opportunities for rehearsing and performing Irishness. These performances I suggest were largely for the benefit of the 'in group' of the Irish themselves, but in identifying themselves to each other, the Irish invariably set themselves apart from other cultural groups. Binding themselves in insular social and cultural structures that, to a large extent, reinforced culture and class identities perhaps also restricted ambition and achievement through an adherence to these cultural 'norms' whilst also leaving them without a voice in post-war England.

This research would support the view that in terms of political agency and social mobility many Irish migrant families were largely voiceless and invisible but confirms ambiguity with regard to the diaspora's ability to see itself. It becomes ironically clear through the following discussions that any invisibility was not necessarily as a direct result of a dominant English ideology or ecology. Rather, that as children of migrants, my contributors expressed their lack of ability to see themselves and their particular cultural context, because their domestic environment was so overwhelmingly Irish.

Sean recollects,

Sean:           At the time it [Chorlton-on-Medlock] was home... I didn't know what an Irish community was until I was 17, until I came out of it, until I started work. Because that was where we lived and we didn't venture out of it. Both school, at home, then went up to secondary school when we moved to Longsight and we're still in the middle of this cocoon.

His sister Niamh picks up the thread,

Niamh:           Because there was very much a strong sense of community there and it was just, you know, there was no fridge,

you'd have to shop every day. My Dad would be out working from six in the morning 'til seven in the evening, work Saturday mornings, and Mum would shop every day... nowhere to store milk. But you got to know the entire street; you would know every single one of your neighbours.<sup>63</sup>

Sean: I still remember them now... Sweeney at the end...remember the McGeadys, the Connollys...

But they point out,

Niamh: I think it was never on the radar to think English or Irish; it was just how it was.

Sean: It was where I lived and I lived in Manchester and I thought everywhere in Manchester's like this, you know.

This idea of not knowing there might be differences was echoed by other contributors to this thesis. A view derived partly from being simply too young to know any different as questions of identity just did not arise in the way that we were now considering them and partly because it was all they knew. There were no benchmarks of 'otherness' against which they could judge themselves even if they were themselves often judged. This interestingly reflects Kiberd's conclusion, but for different reasons than the under-recording or lack of academic consideration, that the Irish "sometimes seemed to have become invisible and inaudible to themselves". (Kiberd, 2016). The prevalence of Irish that inhabited the streets of certain parts of Manchester at that time both inverts and simultaneously echoes Arrowsmith's argument that "without the signifiers of difference upon which conventional discourses of race rely, the Irish...become invisible in Britain". (Arrowsmith, 2006. p.165).

Bernard: Going to Catholic school... so every kid was virtually an Irish Catholic so I didn't know any different.

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<sup>63</sup> This strikes a chord with Clair Wills in her view that women, through domestic roles, integrated more easily into English society as they made regular contact with it but that the men, particularly working class men, through their work and socializing habits, remained more isolated from the English.

Pressed to expand on this theme Bernard continued,

Bernard: I thought it was the norm; I didn't know anything different. None of my friends were [English]...But no-one ever said 'you're Irish'; I just presumed, Irish dancing, every kid in the country did it up until that point... Because the shopkeeper was Irish, the guy in the pub you go to was Irish, so everyone we ever met...my Dad was a builder and so everyone he ever brought to the house was Irish. My Mum was a cleaner so anyone she ever worked with pretty much tended to be sort of Irish. So everyone in my community up until that point had been speaking in an Irish accent because they're all from Ireland sort of thing; if they weren't, they were Irish descent. I even had friends who were born in England but spoke with Irish accents, which I always thought was strange – when I got older; when I was younger I just thought it was the norm. So it wasn't until then, the first time I immersed in another culture that I thought to myself 'hang on, there is something alternative to the one I'm living in'.

This echoes Sean's comments that he didn't know he was part of a particular community until he began to emerge from it. For some, the move from school into work provided the necessary juxtaposition, for others it was a domestic relocation into a less predominantly Irish populated area, which brought their difference to the fore.

Bernard: The first time, I realised there was anything different was when we moved into Burnage and went 'what the hell's going on here' sort of thing... it wasn't just the getting called an Irish bastard, there was loads of things. Adults calling you gypsies and all that; we're going 'eh? what are you on about?'

Martin identified similar issues based around relocation within Manchester.

Martin: ...when we moved to Chorlton. Because I was new to the area as well and you'd get the odd comment of 'Irish pig' or whatever, but you'd get 'stupid Irish', you'd get them kind of comments which I'd never witnessed before, and I suppose because I was vulnerable as a young lad they could get away with saying that... I presume sometimes it's something that they could pick on and knew that was your so-called 'weak spot' or something that they could niggle at me. ... And you don't notice you're Irish when you're a young lad, you know 'your mum and

dad talk funny Irish' or whatever, and I'm thinking 'they don't, they just speak to me' you know. I don't get this what's Irish accent and so on. Once you get a little bit older you recognise it.

Interesting that Martin chooses to see Irishness as a type of vulnerability or a weakness that could be exposed and used against him like wearing glasses or having ginger hair. This sense of vulnerability, we notice emerging earlier in Sean's description of the home environment as being like in a 'cocoon'. Niamh picks up on this too when looking back on their childhood days suggesting, "Oh Yeah, oh maybe I was kind of cosseted by this blanket of invisible Irishness". Though she goes on to correct her earlier recollection saying "Not cosseted but, you know, innocent minority".

Carolyn captures this most directly when she shared her recollection of the times.

Carolyn: My Mum was very much Irish Catholic in terms of church in terms of schools and I suppose I thought most of the world was Irish and Catholic 'til I reached the age of 18 and went away to college and realised there was other people, other religions and other cultures.

When pressed further about her upbringing and whether she would consider it to be Irish or influenced by Irishness she explained:

Carolyn: Well I suppose you went to the local primary school, was predominantly Irish children, of Irish heritage, erm church on Sundays, and holy days and holidays, and any other day, all the religious festivals, confirmation, the communion, erm everyone around us was Irish, and we really only socialised with, sort of, Irish people. I did Irish dancing, when everyone went to, you know when everyone was doing the Brownies or whatever we went to Irish dancing until I was probably 12, 13 and then refused to go anymore. But for years, and that was characterised by every Saturday practically, my Mum's one social outlet was Irish dancing. She was very much based in the home and now when I look back on it, used to go Irish dancing on a Monday night, Irish dancing on a Wednesday



night, and usually there'd be a Feis<sup>64</sup> on the Saturday and we'd go to all three of those... my Mum would take me almost religiously as well – so that was all the Irish music, the Irish context (laughs). Yeh, that's what it was like.

And whether this made her feel different from other children or not she continued,

Carolyn: We mixed and we socialised but it was very much a clearly sort of identifiable culture that you were part of really and it was different. I felt different, from the other children not in any way that now I suppose we have the differences of race and colour etc. but definitely you were Irish and they were English.

Carolyn's description separates the children's ethnicity by their activities, generalizing her experience and suggesting by implication that everyone Irish would have gone to Irish dancing whereas attending Brownies and Scouts was an English pursuit. Certainly the continuation of traditional forms of Irish culture such as dance provide opportunities to express and evidence identification with Ireland and Irishness. Through her consideration of Irish communities in Liverpool and Coventry Marion Leonard (2005) examines the "ways in which traditional music and dance can be employed in the production of a cultural identity". (p. 526), commenting on the "iterative function of music and dance in performing, and as offering a space in which different generations can mark out their affiliation or embody Irishness". (Leonard, 2005. p. 527). Conversations with my contributors clearly support this position as many, if indeed not all, had some experience of or with traditional cultural forms of expression. Irish dancing was not, of course, the preserve of the female line as Bernard recounts:

Bernard: When I was a kid we did everything, my Dad worked as a doorman in Irish clubs... I worked in, worked in the pub, a big Irish pub. From up to about 11 we were immersed totally in the Irish culture, so my sisters all did Irish dancing, I did Irish dancing...

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<sup>64</sup> A festival celebrating traditional arts and culture.

These small differences and more clearly identifiable performances of Irishness such as the dancing did, and in the memories of those interviewed continue to, separate them as children and as families from the 'English other', who, as often the minority group in their streets, only occasionally permeated their existences. The idea persists through many of these discussions that as children they were protected by a shroud of Irishness, cocooned and cosseted due to their vulnerability and innocence with their Irishness in many ways invisible. Of course, most parents would presumably see their role as being to provide such a protection; bringing up their children in a supportive and protective environment until such time as they were ready to engage with external forces, ideas and ideologies. The timing of this progression is not always easy, nor are the 'actors'/participants in control of when or where it happens as Bernard suggests in the following description of the home:

Bernard: I remember the first day we moved in and came down in a van and there was five of us, my Mum had someone else's kid and there was me and my Mum, and I remember the next-door neighbour actually going to shout to her husband 'oh my God, the gypsies have arrived'. And I was thinking 'gypsy, where?', because we had another idea of a gypsy was something completely different... And my Mum went 'it's us you idiots' ...but they would openly say it to you 'oh the gypsies are out on the street'; 'we're bloody not'. So then obviously their kids then took this up which then became a bit of an issue of contention.

The streets became for some, an area of safety, and part of a protective cocoon of Irishness whilst for others it became the stage for expressions of fear, contestation and antagonism. Gerry appeared to have a relatively early awakening in terms of his sense of otherness or difference even if, at the age of five, he found it difficult to characterize. I asked him about the streets where he grew up,

Gerry: I remember being on the street, and there was the Morans, there was the Sheas, Kavanaghs, McGraths, and this was all on one street, it was a street of only 14 houses, 7 on each side, two up two down, and the minority really was the local person, was the local inhabitants.

Interesting perhaps, that despite being born in Manchester he describes the minority group, i.e. the non-Irish, on his street as the 'local person' and differentiates himself, and more naturally his family, from the 'local person'. I followed this by asking if he had any sense at that time whether he was English or Irish or how he felt about this question of identity alignment. His reply was heartfelt and rapid and covered a lot of interesting and relevant ground, material to his answer, and so I choose to include this lengthy extract in its entirety:

Gerry: Oh yeah...when I was about 5 or 6 maybe, I didn't really have a concept of what my identity was, I never really looked or appraised it, whether I was English or... I just thought I was here and that was it, there was nothing significant on, historically, you know there was no wars on, there was no shout for arms or anything at the time, there was nobody to say 'we are English and we're going to...' But I'll tell you what I was very aware of was the troubles in Northern Ireland. It affected me indirectly. I always felt my father and mother had come from a generation where my grandfather fought with the old IRA and no doubt back in 1919 to '23. And I used to get stories, and they used to be a bit glamorised no doubt and a bit of froth, frilled out a bit and everything, about how he fought for the IRA, you know the old IRA as they call it, and how they fought the British. And I felt quite uneasy really, and that was probably the beginning of me having this mixed loyalties of whether I was English or Irish. But I should be Irish because my parents are Irish and I'd been told they're the good guys and they were brave and stories were told romantically in song and everything, it was very glorifying, it was very heartfelt really. I mean, I know my parents were very passionate about it, although they weren't openly honest about it saying they supported the IRA. In hindsight again, it's horrific to think that but at the time it was a bit of a conflict bringing up, and I remember one story, because the school where I went to was a lot of Irish descent, and this English lad (if I can say that, I feel awful saying 'English lads' because I am) came up to me and said 'Gerry, where were you born?' And because I couldn't deny my Irish roots so I said jokingly that I was born on a boat in the middle of the Irish sea. It's childish to think about it. Because I didn't want to say I was English and denying my Irish approach, and vice versa.

This exclamation, or declaration from a confused five or six-year old child, as Gerry remembers it, introduces the idea of conflict being a trigger for identity alignment and revived nationalism, and silently whispers of sectarianism and racism. It nods to growing up amongst those who, as Arrowsmith (2000) described “tell the tale” (p.42), whose imaginary Ireland created, mythologized, and sold to anyone who would listen, retreats to earlier conflicts between the English and ‘the old IRA’ legitimizing both that early 20<sup>th</sup> century conflict and to an extent the on-going tensions of the 1970s, 80s and 90s. It also legitimizes the sense of conflict in young Gerry’s mind. Describing in the present the incident which led to the fabrication of his story about where he was actually born, he feels unsure and unconfident describing the boys at his school as ‘English’ because he feels that he is, in a way, English too. Yet he is, and was, able to draw a distinction between those who were Irish, Irish descent and those who were the ‘local’ English. We see here too, through a glamourized retelling of the trauma of British occupation and Ireland’s struggle for independence the legacy of memory and Murray’s (2014) gloss on Marianne Hirsh’s concept of post-memory impacting directly on Gerry’s recollection and description of the events as he remembers them. Also, how *almost* comically at the time, it problematised a clear understanding of his nationality; his identity and his allegiances driving him to explain that he was born on a boat in the middle of the Irish Sea.

Having considered the immediate external environment, we now move to consider what was happening within the physical structures, the houses, pubs, clubs, churches and schools in which we lived, socialised and worshipped. These often provide vivid and memorable backdrops to the re-narrativisation and revisualisation of our pasts. Some interviewees described houses that were transfixed by the seemingly benign nationalism of Irish inspired pottery and neon Catholic paraphernalia that demonstrated the penetrating reach of the organised church and which emphasised for some, the contrast between their homes and the homes of others. The family home that Eamonn describes for example, begins to capture the many trappings of an Irish household at the time.

Eamonn: Yeah, there was that famous picture of the sacred heart whose eyes followed you in the room wherever you went...Statues of the sacred heart. My Mum was very dedicated to Our Lady so there was quite a lot of Our Lady statues. There was the inevitable, the ubiquitous I suppose in houses, holy water font by the front door, that we would all... in fact I've still got one now, I'm not sure how holy the water is in it... There was always the holy water font and as you entered the house and as you left the house you would dip your finger in and bless yourself; we all did that.

Interesting that Eamonn should imply that all houses would have been the same, suggesting the ubiquity of the holy water receptacle by the front door. A sense that even if there is not one experience of growing up in an Irish house in England, there is a commonality in that Irish Catholic experience and everyone would have had holy water by the door to bless their access, egress and the journeys which separated these two events. Certainly, our small semi-detached house in Teesside had holy water hanging on the wall by the front door and though I do not recall blessing ourselves every time we left the house, we were certainly did so before any lengthy car journey. Today my father has this very same ceramic Marian holy water receptacle positioned inside the backdoor of his house.

I asked Ellie about this as I interviewed her in her living room which contained at least one large and very visible Irish themed ornament. The holy water turned out to be the first thing she remembered:

Ellie: Well there was the font, so you could come in and bless yourself, like with holy water, I always remember that. Then there was the picture of the Sacred Heart, which I've still got actually,... so that must be fifty years old.

And though Ellie went on to say that there were not many things in the house which were related to Ireland she was able to remember,

Ellie: I think mam had some. I've got one but the rest got smashed - some egg cups with like shamrock on or

something<sup>65</sup>, just small items and they were probably more holy type, Catholic type things...

That Ellie should draw attention to the preponderance of religious iconography over Irish memorabilia is not peculiar but is of note. This particular recollection and differentiation is a theme that we will return to later as it both reinforces and undermines the notion of the inseparability of the two.

Julia described her family home in similar terms:

Julia: On one wall we had the Virgin. Over the fireplace was the Sacred Heart with the palm... We had some holy palm that was inserted in the picture of the Sacred Heart with the flame. So there was St Patrick on another wall, the Virgin Mary was on another wall... There was the Irish cottages, the small Irish cottages... from when we went on holiday. I remember a very big horse and cart there... One thing I do remember now, interestingly, was a plate with Jackie Kennedy and John Kennedy and it was up in our hallway above the kitchen door and I think it was my brother was playing ball and he smashed it and he got a right old belting for that, because that was, you know the whole Kennedy adoration, and I am just trying to think of other things, erm, we had a few things of *The Quiet Man*...

BOS: Because of where your Mum's from?

Julia: Where my mother's from, and, I don't know if I told you, to go back to the horse, the horse that was in the film *The Quiet Man* was my Aunt Kathleen's horse. So I am related to, erm... (BOS: The Horse! *[Laughs]* – no, film star royalty, do you mind...

It is clear that many Irish homes and certainly those remembered by my contributors were decorated with both nationalistic and religious iconography. Julia's home resonates clearly with Catholicism and the Irish diaspora through pictures of the two most sainted of families, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and the Kennedys, and through direct links to her parent's home town of Cong, the location for the production of the iconic diasporic feature, *The Quiet Man*. Very

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<sup>65</sup> Most likely Belleek China. For further info see [http://www.belleekpottery.ie/Home\\_](http://www.belleekpottery.ie/Home_)

similar memories were recalled by Sean and Niamh when discussing their childhood home,

Sean: There was lots of it (iconography). A cross

Niamh: Yeah, it's like as you come in the front door.

Sean: Jesus.

Niamh: There was a little...like a holy water font

Sean: Oh yeah, Belleek China<sup>66</sup>

Niamh: Yeah, Belleek China, and in the living room was a picture of a Sacred Heart that was signed by the priest across, and blessed. When we moved into the house, he blessed the house and he signed this picture or blessed it didn't he? ... Was there anything else? Like all these mascots and things kicking about wasn't there?

Sean: Big family bible.

Niamh: Big family bible. God. My sister's still got that picture, the Sacred Heart in her spare bedroom.

Sean: Has she?

Niamh: She can't throw it away. She'll go to hell. She'll go to hell if she throws that away! She'll probably go to hell anyway.  
[Laughs]

Meanwhile, Eamonn continues his recollection of the childhood home, and forms a bridge unwittingly to a story that Terry Christian introduced into his act about the day his sister got married that I will recount in Chapter 5.

Eamonn: We always had the Child of Prague<sup>67</sup>, whose head fell off obviously [*both laugh*] and we've got a Child of Prague now and do you know why? And this is... this always works without fail, if you're having an event like a wedding, or like a 21<sup>st</sup> outside, you want people to be able to go in the garden and it's going to be pouring down, you put the statue

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<sup>66</sup> See previous footnote

<sup>67</sup> For additional information on the Child of Prague see <http://www.pragjesu.cz/en/>.

of the Child of Prague outside the night before, *[clicks fingers]* and the weather is fine the next day, now I can guarantee that, that's straight from the Archangel Gabriel, the Child of Prague is there and that's, I don't know why but that's the famous statue on every single statue of the Child of Prague, the head falls off.

Our own Child of Prague was never used as an external promissory of good weather but it always had a coin cellotaped to its underside. It transpires that this practice is derived from a belief that if there is a coin under the statue then the house will never go short of money. Things might be tight but you would never run out completely. The fact that the coin under the statue made it more likely to fall over is also one reason perhaps why the celebrated cycle of decapitation and re-capitation of the statue was commonplace. Reflecting Billig's concept of Banal Nationalism, E. Francis King (2009) has considered the significance of ornamentation in a domestic setting suggesting that

material objects are a means for carrying one's past in memory and for realising emotional as well as practical relationships with the self and others...Material culture does not have meaning unless through sets of specific relationships but, when such relationships are in place even the most unpretentious of objects are neither neutral nor passive. (p. xiii)

Through the interview extracts, we have been presented with a number of common and recurrent images emerging from the within the particular re-imagining of individual childhood homes - each with meaning and resonance, from items of Belleek china synonymous with Ireland, to pictures of the Sacred Heart and statues of the Virgin Mary and the Child of Prague. The physical representation of Irishness and Catholicism in the childhood home and their often specific ritual significance has continued into adulthood where their significance lies in the memory of these times and the legacy of those memories. These twin attributes associated with the materiality of identity and memory are acknowledged by the M sisters but equally they pick up on particular behaviours, communal and ritual practices, as well as practical adornments:



Mary: It wouldn't be so much about objects in the house, it would be more about practices I think. So like Sunday it used to be, you got up, you went to Mass, you came back, you had sausage and egg which you would never have had, you wouldn't have had a cooked breakfast would you in the rest of the week and then quite often, do you remember that old blue record player? And then my Dad would get the records out and we'd listen to the Wolfe Tones<sup>68</sup>.

Ruth: Do you not remember when Dad... to get a bit of extra money, he used to do the bar on a, originally on a Saturday and Sunday night at the working man's club which was attached to the works and he'd be off in work and me Mum, well she'd have us sat there and she'd have the little record player and she'd be playing the *Patriot Game* and any Wolfe Tones, any Dubliners, and she'd sit there and we'd sing it, repeat it back and you know that line now, do you remember doing that?

Mary: Do you know, I don't remember her doing that but... I know the words to nearly every single rebel song, *Kevin Barry*, the *Lonely Banner Strand*, *Patriot Games*...

Ruth: ... what we did used to do though, me and our Mary at night, when me Dad come in from the club if he'd had a few drinks and he'd bring people in wouldn't he?

Mary: Yes.

Ruth: ...and so the few people that come back, not all necessarily Irish, but anyway. And we'd hear them and me and our Mary would be laying there and we'd go 'right come on', because we knew, we'd go downstairs, me Dad would be going 'Here's me darlings' and we'd sing all the rebel songs and we'd get money, do you remember that?

Mary: Yeah, I do.

Ruth: We used to do it all the time.

Music seemed to play a part in many of my contributor's home lives and, in its type and function, helped to continue the stories and mythologies around Irish history and in particular Ireland's relationship to England. The experience of

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<sup>68</sup> The Wolfe Tones, named after the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Irish Nationalist leader. The group is well known for renditions of pro Republican ballads formed circa 1963  
<http://www.wolfe-tonesofficialsite.com/history.htm>

being brought up listening to, learning and performing rebel songs and Irish ballads was not an uncommon recollection neither was it uncommon that Irish music provided the audio sound track to many contributor's stories.

Carolyn: ... the whole music scene, erm, you know, I mean it was, the violin, Irish music there was no other type of music ever played in and around us in the house or anything like that, again I didn't know anything about classical music... pop music when I became a teenager but it was, it was just they [her parents] brought with them everything and were very self-contained in their little world.

BOS: so what sort of things were you listening to in terms of music?

Carolyn: ...well the diddly diddly stuff all the time. We had Radio Éireann on all the time, you know, it was that, and all the classic, I mean I can't remember them now 'cos it's been so long since I listened to music like that. But, just the Country and Western stuff that came out of Ireland.

Similarly, Bernard recalls,

Bernard: I remember we put on rebel songs she'd [Bernard's mother] always play, particularly when we went to Burnage we always used to play it really low because obviously we didn't want them [the neighbours] hearing 'armoured cars attack'<sup>69</sup> or whatever else it might be.

And Gerry tells us,

Gerry: My Dad used to play the button accordion and the whistle, but he never passed it on to me. In fact the only thing that was passed on to us from say my mother and father were Irish dancing, my two sisters did that religiously. And funnily enough, though I've passed that on to my children, the music, because I just thought it was a missed opportunity... I used to listen to songs about James Connolly, how he was lined up in a chair and shot, and I think how romantic, how gallant was that, yet but in hindsight it wasn't really...

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<sup>69</sup> Paraphrasing *The Men Behind The Wire*. A song describing arrests made by British soldiers and recognising the practice of internment. Perhaps the most well-known version was recorded by the Wolfe Tones in 1973.

Brother and sister Sean and Niamh have similarly vivid memories of music being a memorable aspect of their childhood but with much less glamorous or gallant associations.

Niamh: So the car would be absolutely groaning because, you know, food is more expensive in Ireland than here; Mum would try and bring as much food as she could for us. And clothes, I don't know we'd have that many changes of clothing [*Laughs*]. The roof rack groaning and yeah, the car would be absolutely jam packed going across for a three/four-week holiday, not just for nine people, there was five people in the front and four in the back. And we would always like, we'd get a little bit of spends or saved up or something like that and we would stuff ourselves stupid. Because we never ever got any, I think that's the only reason why we've got, you know, teeth, we would never have any sweets, we never had any sweets. When we were going to Ireland we'd stuff ourselves stupid and there was always somebody chucking up at windows outside, you know, vomiting and the car wouldn't stop, it would just be...

BOS: And that journey from Liverpool to Belfast wouldn't have been that comfortable either, I wouldn't [*laughs*], I wouldn't have thought?

Niamh: Really rocky, yeah.

Sean: Well we'd have me Dad sat in the front smoking his head off with rebel songs playing on the tape machine and plumes of smoke, packed like sardines, stinking of vomit, it wasn't, wasn't a pleasant trip.

We will hear a similar description later from Steve Coogan and there is no doubt that the impact of these olfactory experiences on the emotions attached to individual's memory remains personal and specific. I continued this musical theme asking:

BOS: So were you, I mean you say that about the songs on the tape in the car, was there music in the house when you were growing up as well?

Sean: No.

Niamh: Not really.

Sean: It was a...

BOS: A holiday treat?

Sean: No, it was weird because me Dad used to have a bit of a vinyl collection of Big Tom and the Mainliners and Joe Lynch and Val Doonican and there were all these Irish showband type music but when he went to Ireland it was, I don't know where they came from but it was like pirate recordings of these strong Republican rebel songs. And it was a bit unnerving because this would be playing as he's pulling up at an Army checkpoint and there'd be the British Army there with their rifles slung over their shoulders and the Wolfe Tones would be belting out something, but yeah.

Many of the narratives I explored with my contributors identified a common thread in their Sunday morning activities and for the M sisters music provided a key memory for them as they thought back to their childhood, mirroring almost precisely my own memories of a typical Sunday returning from serving on the altar as Mass to singing along to acts of heroism performed to the detriment of the notorious Black and Tans.

Whilst there may have been at times a monetary pay-off for the ability to perform 'Irishness' in front of an audience, these stories clearly identify the home itself as a key location both for forming and performing Irish identity; it being a specific site for individual and collective performances as we have considered above. From the gathering of friends after Mass or after the pubs and clubs have shut, songs have been sung and stories told to remember old Ireland. The children too were required to sing, providing a further living and tangible link to Ireland through performances of cultural allegiance and cultural continuity as discussed in Leonard (2005), re-rooting Ireland into their English living rooms, whilst simultaneously transporting their parents back to their former homes and lives in Ireland. Although the ritual performance of attending Mass is a significant memory for all of my contributors, we have considered briefly too the role of the church in down playing Irishness in favour of Catholicism. Harte (2006) has commented on the diluting influence of the English Catholic school system on Irish identity drawing on Hickman (2005) to suggest forcefully that "education has been a prime way in which the public

mask of Catholicism has rendered Irishness invisible in Britain” (p. 234). His conclusion however, resonates with the experiences detailed in this chapter where Irishness is clearly reinforced in the home and where “the family has provided a counterpoint to the school and its incorporating strategies<sup>70</sup>”. (Harte, 2006. p. 234). Recalling Gillespie’s (1995) observation of the North Indian diaspora in Southall “living in the India they left behind” (p. 180), establishes clear parallels with the Irish diaspora in the transference of identity through *mise-en-scène*, history and song. Through the intergenerational performance of songs such as those performed by the M sisters, families softened the impact of their enforced exilic existence and reinforcing strong Irish roots, traditions and memories. In effect establishing an Ireland in England from which the next generation of ‘rebels’ would emerge.

Julia commented during our interview,

Julia: Irish emigrating here were coming to a hostile... in many aspects, a hostile nation where there have been political stuff going on... for years and years and still was in the consciousness of our, of the people.

And whilst most it seems were brought up listening to the Irish Rebel songs from earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, (*The Ballad of James Connolly*, Kevin Barry, *Boulovoque* for example) many that I interviewed were also introduced to more contemporary representations of ‘The Troubles’, particularly through the recordings of The Wolfe Tones, which would additionally inform our developing sense of identity.

As the Irish were arriving into a hostile environment, and coming to live and work in the land of the oppressor, one could expect that comfort, strength and unity would have been sought and gained from working, socializing, and worshipping with people from a similar background and culture with a shared understanding of their recent history. Interestingly, the way in which my interviewees parents spoke to them about their treatment in England and their

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<sup>70</sup> See Hickman, 2005. (p. 163)

feelings towards England and the English was generous given the songs and stories that were passed on when the Irish got together and the treatment that some certainly endured. Whether their reflections were genuine or were actually presented as a way of helping their children to engage with the country and the English more openly and fully, understanding their parents to bear no grudges against the English, is uncertain. Though levels of ambiguity existed in many households.

For example, I asked Julia if there was ever any sense of anti-English feeling in the house,

Julia: Oh God, yes *[laughs]* yes. It does have to be said my father had a selection of words... that he would... call, you know, the people in the street whatever, 'Brits' let's say was the most polite. 'He's only an old tan' was, was quite common. I do think that... my father always, and to this day, has held on to his Irishness, really really strongly. He only went, for 50 years with his Irish friends, and he would have Irish friends, he would search out Irish friends, but obviously along the way, we lived in a street that... was full of English people and he has got a nice reputation of the nice Irishman who will talk to each other... but... I do remember certain incidences that he has told me about anti-Irish incidences that he will talk about, kind of remember, but he will also say 'no, no, the English have been kind of fine to me', is his overall impression.

Similarly, the M sisters remember these similar ambiguities,

Mary: In Moss Side, he [their father] was a young lad, only 16 and he tells this story now and he said 'And I'd had a few beers and I'd jump on the table' and I'd say 'Take me to the nearest gallows I want to die for Ireland', when he'd had about ten pints. And my Mum always says, he only really kind of carried on his Irishness, if that makes sense, when he'd had a few... Mum probably felt more isolated and she certainly has referred a couple of times to what she felt was bigotry that perhaps Dad never had because I think, you know, Dad was at work and was socialising and maybe the men in the factory were, some of them, not all of them were Irish...

Interesting to consider this reflection alongside both T. P. Coogan (2002) and Wills' (2015) suggestion that women integrated more easily because of their

domesticity and proximity to English culture and the English. Here it is precisely this proximity that brought women more readily into conflict and as a result created a further sense of isolation.

Mary continues,

Mary: ... and do you remember when she moved back to Ireland and she said, she was moving out of the house that we'd grown up in, you know, and she'd taken some of the plants and things, you know like to take to a new home in Ireland and as she was leaving. We were saying goodbye to her just before she was about to go off the next day and she was taking the flowers or something and she said 'I'm not leaving anything here', I said, 'What apart from your seven kids' *[laughs]*. But that was her perspective and Dad's comment about living in England 'I've been 50 years behind enemy lines' and he says that and he doesn't mean it. It's a joke but Mum's got more deep-seated, in my opinion, a more deep-seated sense of her Irishness and her culture and I wouldn't say negativity toward Britain. That's maybe a bit hard, but I don't think she ever felt like she belonged, not as a young mum growing up in that area, I don't think so...

Gerry also remembers such conversations, which appear similarly in most contributors' reflections. Compounded by their own experiences of being brought up in a post-memory environment which reinforced a negative view of the British, our parents managed a difficult combination of feelings of a real and deeply rooted antagonism towards England and the English, whilst recognizing that it was in the country of the oppressor that they now found shelter, work and some security. Gerry earlier described his experiences of being brought up in a strongly Irish household that led him to say that he was born on a boat in the middle of the Irish Sea, and yet here he characterises his father's view slightly differently:

Gerry: He's grateful to this country. It's done a lot for him; it's given him a lot of opportunities and I think he's seen his children grow up, grandchildren – doing reasonably well. I'm not saying top of the chains in whatever they do but they're doing reasonably well. And I think it's filled him with a bit of, 'you know whatever I did, it was right'.

Nevertheless, this mythologizing and romanticizing of the rebel past is a feature of many of the interviews that I carried out. By way of introducing himself, Bernard launched into a wide-ranging and very pacey overview of his family and experiences as a child which included reference to the armed struggles of the past and his introduction to the English/Irish divide:

Bernard: ... every summer holiday was in Ireland, 6 weeks in Ireland, a week in one side and then 5 weeks over on the farm on the other side... big families on both sides. My family's very political, my Mum's very, very political. My grandfather was in the, like many people of that generation, was in the Real IRA, lost all his toes, because him and other members they dug a hole for the Black and Tans, a lorry coming in, got caught and they were made to fill it back in without their shoes and socks on and got frostbite and lost all his toes....And two uncles were members back in those days. So I remember we were over there, they'd have us marching in little lines doing this and that and doing all these, so we are very, very political and every Sunday it would be Mass back home, Irish rebel songs on and people round for drinks, music...

For migrant families, the house and the home environment provided a shelter from the perceived and real hostility encountered from time to time and a safe place in which to poke fun at the indigenous English. This acted as both a defence mechanism and a coping mechanism perhaps attempting to deflect any associated negativity which might be directed towards the children as a result of their cultural heritage. Mary's story echoes Bernard's earlier account about the attitude of the neighbours towards the incoming Irish.

Mary: But I remember he [their neighbour] was, we were playing out one Sunday, he came and he knocked on my Mum's door. I think we must have kicked the ball into his garden for the 17<sup>th</sup> time and he said something like 'Just when one of yours gets old enough to not want to play out anymore you go and have another one'. Now he possibly didn't use the phrase, 'because you're a whatever', but I think certainly, and Mum felt that that, intimation was there, you know whether it's your Irish, whether you're Catholic.



And the ubiquitous jokes about the Irish having large families was a theme similarly picked up by Sean as an example of how he was picked on outside of the home.

Sean: It was only through this drip, drip, drip of comments I was getting from people I knew through work, and and people making small talk: 'how many brothers and sisters have you got?' 'I've got six' and then you're getting the wisecracks about 'did you have a sheepdog instead of a babysitter?' And then I'm going home saying to me mum 'look Mum, everybody says I come from a big family, I've got six brothers and sisters' because everybody at school and all my cousins all had similar size families, me Mum and Dad were one of ten and one of eleven... But yeah, I remember asking me Mum what did she think was a big family and she said [one family] who had twenty-two", that was a big family to me Mum. But to us six, seven, eight, nine wasn't a big family. So yeah, that was when I was made aware that I was from an Irish community and not an English community.

And whilst this recollection appeared to position this encounter as benign 'banter', it was also clearly an othering device designed to acknowledge and accentuate difference. Harte (2004) again effectively captures the essence of this casual racism in the context of an emigrant life in his consideration of Mary Davys' autobiographical writing from the early 18<sup>th</sup> Century acknowledging, "Mary Davys' knowing representation of her struggle to counter her English hosts' construction of her as exotic 'other' constitutes a piquant inscription of the sinuous complexities of the identity performance produced by the act of migration". (Harte, 2004. p. 230). Three hundred years of intervening history does not seem to have changed attitudes to any significant degree. As a result, the home not unnaturally provided a place of refuge to the children. However, the strong Irish culture of the home, whilst providing the 'counterpoint' to English cultural hegemony, 'exotic othering' and casual racism also proved to be the culture some would seek to move away from as teenagers and adults. Both Bernard and Carolyn reflect on the limited and insular nature of the Irish community at the time both thinking that there must be more to life than those closed networks offered. In 1982, at around the age of fifteen or sixteen Bernard recalls a friend of his putting Bobby Sands and

hunger striker related graffiti on the school walls and Bernard and other friends feeling distanced by it.

Bernard: and that was when I started changing, started having... I wouldn't say I turned away from being Irish but I certainly got into more conflict with it, because I then started working in the Irish Centre... as a pot-collector and started working in the pub as soon as I was old enough working behind the bar. Do you know, I felt the community was a little bit restrictive, it was a little bit small... I want a bigger and better world which is more exciting.

As he grew up small things became more significant, more defining, and more representative of a life he didn't want.

Bernard: ... Remember I was following all the fashions of the terraces and I had mates who would go to the Irish clubs who were wearing suits when they were like 14/15... My Dad going 'why are you dressing like that?' and going 'because this is what you do nowadays'. So there was those sort of issues. But I used those to reinforce me turning my back on it sort of thing, to go 'it's too insular. It's too small. I want summat bigger and more exciting'

Gerry has a very similar recollection of his experience in the Irish clubs of the time perfectly resonating with Bernard's view,

Gerry: Well I'd go to St Joseph's in Longsight, St Richard's, St Brendan's, you'd do the whole circuit. But they're exactly the same, wherever you went it was exactly the same. And it felt like children my age who were far more frequent going were very, very old for their age. I thought they were too mature, they were too sensible, they were too... the way they dressed, quite old-fashioned, like our parents. And I think deep down I sort of rebelled against that a little bit, you know. I wanted to break away from it, I felt like nothing was changing... And the young people were quite willing to do that and do the old-fashioned dancing. I did it, I did Siege of Ennis's and God knows, and Ceilidh dancing and things but I soon got fed up of it. I just thought there's a bigger world out there.

Through Counsell's (2009) consideration of Connerton, we noted that fashions "can function as vehicles for cultural remembering" (p. 6). Dressing like one's

parents could be considered therefore, a visible re-presentation of the past as the present. Whilst this adoption of fashion is distinct from the adoption of an Irish accent, it nevertheless lays claim to a connection with history and the recent past and re-members it for a contemporary audience. This same fashion noticeably became a tangible tension for both Bernard and Gerry contributing to their frustration with their peers and with what it said to them about the world around them and any possibilities for advancement and liberation.

Carolyn provides an interesting response to this, coming to quite a revelatory conclusion.

Carolyn: ... it's back to that people are almost more Irish than the Irish, you know, and have all those external trappings, you know, they've got the shamrock, they've got Good Friday, they've got the flag, they've got the churchgoing and they've got just all the caricature I suppose of what an Irish person is... You know, you see them down at the Irish festival every year, don't you, down in Albert Square, you know, or in the Irish Club etc. Yeah, they drink a lot, they have a certain lifestyle. I suppose they're not often particularly, err, highly educated but they're hard working. I mean, you know, there's a lot of good people but they never, because they're so busy being Irish they've not really found who they are.

Both Carolyn and Bernard considered why they have rejected or should re-join an Irish community and see both in terms of the particular relevance of it to their lives at certain points. The conclusion being that, for Bernard leaving and Carolyn attempting to re-join (albeit over thirty years apart), the community seemed too narrow, too insular and too concerned with maintaining or replicating the past than seeking a celebratory position in a post-national, post-Catholic context. What we see here, for Bernard and Carolyn most clearly at least, is as Higgins (2016) describes, "the human negotiation of the spaces between the place of origin and final destination" (p. 40). The brief, or indeed, extended periods when we are able to take a step back from our daily performances and beliefs, or find ourselves standing outside of where we thought we were, provide a series of hiatuses in which we reflect, accept or reject our current and contingent positioning however consciously we arrived

there. Equally importantly, to paraphrase Stuart Hall, is the ability to explore the spaces within these seemingly limited and limiting cultures as well as the spaces between. Perhaps for Bernard, and others who have returned to embrace that which they left behind, they have been able to negotiate the spaces *within*, whereas those who cannot gain access for themselves are still exploring the spaces *between* – the spaces of essential disconnect between ‘us’ and a ‘them’, and ‘over here’ and an ‘over there’. For the displaced diasporan and subsequent generations, these hiatuses and recalibrations highlight the lacunae in a more positive way and in so doing, they unite the past and the present just as previously they may have forced them apart. It will not only be through consciously or unthinkingly replicating and remembering the past, but also in remembering why we may have rejected that past that we might find a truer sense of self.

For these responses to be enacted however, there is firstly a requirement to remember the past, or at least authored versions of the past. This requirement was met in the telling of stories in Irish households and the particular sense of social cohesion it engendered at the time.

Bernard: ... No-one in my family can sing or is musical at all. Storytelling was the big thing in our sort of thing, and I suppose if you haven't got one talent you generally find it somewhere else. So when we sat round it would always be one person who'd be telling a story which... it's the whole point of getting people laughing isn't it and it would be our big thing.... and that would be on the Sunday there would always be one person holding court and then the next person holding court.... Real life stories...

The telling of stories looms large in many recollections of home life. Whether as a method of dealing with grief, as a way of keeping a live link to Ireland through the retelling of childhood memories, or tales of anti-Irish feeling encountered on arrival in England. The nature of the story might be less important than the ability to ‘tell the tale’ as Bernard concluded,

Bernard: And that's something I've got from my Mum and Dad... So Saturday night when we go out it will be just the same

again, people telling stories, whether it be about the week or whether it be about years ago, it won't make any difference.

The place of the storyteller in Irish history is well recognised. The *Seanachie* (*Seanchaí*) being traditionally a travelling storyteller/historian who would roam the country or county passing on news and retelling tales as they went. Whether or not the creative and performance ability of the *Seanachie* has been passed on systematically or through a kind of cultural osmosis is unclear though an oral tradition is common amongst rural and relatively unschooled communities throughout the world. Of course there are plenty of people who, despite their Irish heritage and levels of education, would not be able to hold an audience. But, for those who can, there is a rich tradition upon which to hang a suggestion of creativity through such continuity. Eamonn, who has had successful careers in both teaching and broadcasting recalls,

Eamonn: I mentioned the house was full of people, including priests.... And it wasn't... by definition, it wasn't a quiet house, but it wasn't a mad house. It was a house full of stories, and a house of laughter, and a house of fun and what has become known as 'the *craic*'. And I distinctly remember being allowed to stay up for a bit, and it would be, you know, there'd be fairly semi-formal evenings if it was a priest that had popped around and you'd give them a bit of tea and a cup of tea and 'yes father, marvellous', and then they'd go home happy. But if it was my Mum's mates who had gone through that whole going to the Gaelic League together, or if it was my Dad's friends who had come over from Ireland at different times and would gather together, those were very different evenings 'cos that was just reminiscences. 'Do you remember when, and the trouble we got into and the mischief we got up to, and or such a body's died, and such a body's not well, she's had a baby' and all of that, but just laughing, great stories, one after another. And after having been sent to bed I would, I'm sure my Mum and Dad knew, I would just come back and sit on the stairs, and listen and listen.

I remember equally well as a child going up to bed only to try and stay awake to hear the sound of grown-ups laughing and telling stories late into the night. This may or may not be peculiar to Irish households but it certainly laid the foundations for ways of behaving and creative working later in life for some.

BOS:            You talked about your [radio] show, trying to replicate the idea of the travelling storytelling and musicians, do you think there is something in that, not that it's that background that makes you a creative person as such, but there's something about that tradition that you are aware of or inherit or...?

Eamonn:        I absolutely put it all down to that which is a fairly bold statement I suppose... in the same way as her [Eamonn's mother] dancing skill was passed to us and in the same way her love of music and Dad's music was passed to us, so their love of telling a story. They were communicators; teachers all their life. You can't be a successful teacher without being a great storyteller, a great communicator and it's a very short jump as you'll see across many personalities. It's a very short hop from being a teacher to being a radio presenter, TV presenter, writer, you know....I don't regard myself as having a skill; I just regard myself as a bit of a gobshite who can bore people to death, as you can testify. *[both laugh]*

Such descriptions of songs, stories and history being passed on confirm the home as a key site of both personal and social identity formation and reformation. Earlier it was considered that these attempts at identity transference and consolidation caused the second, and perhaps subsequent generations to feel rootless. We might also here consider Eng's notion that it is in "the very condition of in-betweenness...the incommensurability of differences...[and] their irreducible resistance to complete dissolution" (2004. p. 17) that we find a cause for such rootlessness or we might yet conclude that it was actually in the rejection of these formal performances and allegiances that such rootlessness emerged.

As Gerry has already recalled, he was made very aware of his heritage and his family's involvement in the struggle for independence in the decade 1916-1926. When thinking about his position relative to the Irish-born that he encounters when staying in the house he has renovated in Co Cork, he suggests:

Gerry:            I don't think it [one's degree of Irishness] really makes a difference. I think Ireland today, or Irish people today, are more quite European, I think they're quite happy to forget about the past. You know 100 years is coming up in the Easter

Risings and that's going to be a big thing, but I don't think they want to talk about it, the younger people. When I say the younger people, people say before...younger than 30, they don't really want to discuss it. Whereas my whole life was nearly discussing it with people and the comparisons and... you know.

It may be an exaggeration to say that he has spent nearly his entire life *discussing* Irish history and its legacy, but it is clear that it has certainly *underpinned* his entire life. Proving again that the shadow of emigration looms large in the consciousness of the migrant and that the same shadow falls on subsequent generations too.

When trying to capture the *mise-en-scène* of the Irish household, we note the difficulty my contributors have in separating Irishness, or at least representations of Irishness, from Catholicism. Particularly in relation to the iconography within the house. As a clear and tangible location, the church and its rituals provides an obvious and site specific space for the rehearsal and performance of real-life dramatic narratives. Whilst it is not of itself Irish, we see now how difficult it is for some to separate their Catholicism from their Irishness. The interview with Sean and Niamh captures this quite simply:

Sean: ...to talk about the Irish community without being, talking about being a Catholic or going to the Holy Name Church it's quite hard to do one without crossing over to the other. But whether it's the Catholic thing or the Irish, being an Irish community, I do miss being part of, part of one and both of that.

And yet there are contradictory views expressed between my interviewees and even within their own narratives. If, as we seem to have established through various readings and personal statements that Irishness and Catholicism appear largely inseparable in terms of thinking through the Irishness of our childhoods, there is a clear separation emerging in the minds of my contributors. Bernard for example describes himself as an atheist saying:

Bernard: I turned against Catholicism quite early on at 14, and I don't like organised religion. I'm an atheist, so again maybe that's some of the negativity I see about it... when I think about Irish I think of Catholicism. I think of all those sort of

rituals and that, those pressures they put themselves under... So yeah, maybe that's another thing I do see that... I do... and religion I do see as a little bit of regressing on people's opinions, it does hold them back.

Yet Bernard was also clearly able to state:

Bernard: I don't think I went back to Ireland for 24 years, and then went back and realised how much I'd missed, and loved it. I've been back every year since probably two or three times a year now'.

In its simplicity, this perhaps presents a separation of the Church and religion from cultural and national identity. As children, and in reconsidering their childhoods for this thesis, Irishness and Catholicism could not easily be separated. Yet, from Bernard's testimony, it seems possible that having left both, you can return to one and not the other. Catherine Bell (1992)<sup>71</sup> considers Edward Shils rationalization that "beliefs could exist without rituals; rituals however, could not exist without beliefs". (p. 19). In this way, it perhaps becomes more understandable that one can turn one's back on the rituals of the Catholic Church without necessarily losing faith, and in Bernard's case, turning his back on the rituals of Irishness at that time evidenced his loss of faith in diasporic Irishness as a true reflection of his identity.

That said, the formative period of many of our lives, and certainly everyone I interviewed, recalled the centrality of the church and regular collective worship and allied to collective worship in the church was the act of collective worship at home. I have to say, this was not something that I remembered myself until Eamonn brought it up during our conversation and then quite vivid memories of us as children, on our knees in the living room or kneeling beside our beds,

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<sup>71</sup> Bell's footnote in relation to the Shils quote indicates, "Edward Shils from Edward Shils, "Ritual and Crisis," in *The Religious Situation*: 1968, ed. Donald R. Cutler (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), p. 736. (This version of "Ritual and Crisis" differs substantially from a paper with the same name included in Sir Julian Huxley, ed., "A Discussion of Ritualization of Behavior in Animals and Man," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, series B, 2,51 [1966]: 447-50.)



came readily to mind, as we said our prayers with our parents before going to sleep.

Eamonn: In the early days we all prayed night prayers together, you know, and we knelt down, this is tiny kids, and in October and in May<sup>72</sup>. I think we would say Rosary every night as well, which in later years I've kind of in a contemplative way I've taken, especially when my Mum was very ill. I took great comfort in and whenever I was... I was never by my Mum's bedside in hospital without Rosary beads in my pocket which I... I actually took myself by surprise at why I would be doing that. There's a great chunk of my life in-between where I didn't bother.

BOS: Have you returned to it now or not really?

Eamonn: To Catholicism? Well I've never left Catholicism. I don't subscribe to all of the activities that used to be deemed very important, you know, I don't think I'm going to get struck down dead if I eat meat on a Friday. I don't think I'm going to get sent to hell if I don't go to Mass on a Sunday and women don't wear hats in church. I don't sit on the left and you don't have to fast for three hours before Holy Communion. So all of that man-made rules which are really you know, we all know now are there to control everybody, none of that matters. What matters, I do believe in God, regard myself as a strong Catholic and practising Catholic, although that definition may be challenged by, you know, a priest or a bishop because I don't go to Mass every week and neither do the kids actually...

It is interesting that Eamonn found it both comforting to return to prayer and surprising that he felt the need to take Rosary beads with him when visiting his mother in hospital. Interestingly Francis King (2009) explores the disappearance of rituals associated with the Virgin Mary in Catholic devotions and perhaps captures the essence of Eamonn's behaviour suggesting, "The simplest and smallest of objects can carry a material charisma that, for individuals, can be directly related to both physical and emotional awareness" (p. xi). We heard earlier that his mother had a particular devotion to Mary exemplified in the ornaments around his childhood home, so particularly for

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<sup>72</sup> May and October, months recognised by the Catholic Church as months of Marian devotion.

Eamonn, and I suspect many of an earlier generation brought up with Mary as a prominent figure, the Rosary remains significant. For Eamonn too, the physical act of going to a church has become significantly less important than the act of prayer, and this is a physical and tactile act of prayer not simply an ethereal spiritual practice.

All contributors, even those who would say they were not particularly religious, remembered going to church every Sunday, feast days and holy days, and during Lent – some every day during Lent. When asked, for example, if Catholicism was quite prominent both in school and at home Julia describes herself being “sauna-ed in Catholicism... as an Irish Catholic, sauna-ed in it”. As a writer, Julia presumably chooses her words with care. The idea of being enveloped by the stifling, airless humidity of the Catholic Church and its ritual demands is debilitatingly claustrophobic and she captures elegantly the sense of suffocation and stagnation that drove many away from organized religion as soon as the choice became theirs.

As the Church, the state and the Catholic schools have, or at least had, been so closely linked in Ireland over the last century it should perhaps come as no surprise that there were very close links, as Hickman et al. (1997) recognised, between the Catholic school system and the Catholic Church in England too. Often churches were physically attached as well as integral to the everyday life of the school with the service of Mass happening frequently throughout the academic year. Many of my contributors were taught by nuns or priests, and it was certainly not exceptional to see priests around the local schools.

Tim recalls,

Tim: Catholicism was very strong. Because my father was, and my mother was, and obviously going to Catholic schools, that was the Irishness that I got, I think I got fed that kind of Irish Catholic-ness. We were always going to church obviously on a Sunday and on other holidays that there were, because we went to Catholic School. My brother had an incident actually, funnily enough. He went to [name of school removed] because my Mum took him there and he basically got enrolled

in there and then, that's actually a Protestant school, and he got taken out of that school by the priest. The local priest came to see my Mum and said you know it isn't right for him to be in there and then, I know that he got taken out because I remember the stories.

The long arm of the Church reached out and reclaimed a child for itself. This sectarian fuelled intervention was touched on by Martha, who, though at a later stage in her life, experienced a similar encroachment,

Martha: I wanted to be a teacher and I wanted to teach little ones. So I looked into it and I saw Elizabeth Gaskell<sup>73</sup> and I thought 'great' and I applied. And then when I told the school there was a furore that I apply to a non-Catholic college, so they refused to give me a reference. So I wrote back, because in those days you had to write everything, I wrote back to Elizabeth Gaskell and said I had to withdraw my application because I couldn't have a reference. They wrote back and gave me an unconditional offer, said they would accept me without. They must have known. Anyway the powers that be, you live with my father you do as you're told, I also got a place at [another teacher training college – name removed] which was Catholic so I was told I had to go there.

Here then, the joint forces of the Catholic school and a Catholic father conspired to prevent Martha taking up a place at her preferred teacher training college. However, the story of prejudice does not finish there:

BOS: And did you then go on and teach in Catholic schools?

Martha: Well you see I was primary trained and it was at the time when I qualified you had to go into a pool and there was only one job and a friend of mine got that one job, so that's when I went into secondary... when we had our leaving ceremony the Bishop said 'where are you working?' I said the name of a High School in Wythenshawe, I've got a job, I was so chuffed. And he went 'it's not Catholic' and I said 'well no, I couldn't get a job'. 'It's better not to work child' he says, and he refused to shake my hand...

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<sup>73</sup> Elizabeth Gaskell College, a non-denominational Teacher Training College in Manchester UK.

Even on completion of her teaching qualification the Church attempted to continue its intervention in her life by suggesting that she should not work in the state, i.e. non-denominationally Catholic, sector. As Martha concluded, “He said it was better not to work than to go over there into the state school system, where obviously it was totally depraved”.

Carolyn recalls an incident in school which now chimes neatly with the feelings expressed by Bernard and Gerry about the narrowness of the outlook of the times, but which also reveals a more derogatory view of Irishness and Irish culture. This exchange took place in a Catholic school containing children predominantly of Irish descent. Of course, it was possible to be Catholic and not Irish, but in our small worlds, pretty much everyone who was Irish was a Catholic.

Carolyn: ...it's funny because you're surrounded by other people that are like you; I never felt much anti-Irish feeling. I just remember once we had this teacher at school and erm, and I think we must have been doing something about music in Junior 4. I must have been about 10 or 11, and we must have had some sort of introduction to classical music or whatever and I said, 'oh, you know, erm, my brother plays the flute and I've got an aunt that plays the fiddle' and all that, and she went 'ahh, the fiddle'. I remember her saying it, 'that's not proper music that's just that Irish diddly diddly stuff' and I remember that's the first time that I'd ever heard of, from the school anyway, any negative comment about it. And then I thought... mmm maybe there is more... it's quite interesting when you think about how narrow that upbringing was.

As a much younger child, Tim experienced matters differently, not perhaps considering the Church and/or church schools as interventionist organizations but certainly ones that could nevertheless instil fear and anxiety.

Tim: ... I remember distinctly the morning of having to go and do my first holy con, erm, my first confession, and I said to my Mum 'But I've done nothing wrong so why do I need to confess?' She says 'everybody needs to do it' and I was lying on the bed and I said 'I don't need to do it, I've done nothing wrong. I'm going to have to make stuff up and that's lying'. And then you kind of go into a scary room with a man who's asking you to tell you what you've done wrong, and you haven't done

anything wrong! I found all that really scary, and quite frightening and actually became quite fearful. I've never really said this to anybody I don't think, is that I used to read the bible, because I was so scared of things happening that I needed to pray. My dislike now of the Catholic faith is that it made me fearful as a child. And I'm glad I wasn't very good at being an altar boy [laughs] You know, I used to read scripts from the Bible. I used to pray, like, I was so frightened as a child. Frightened of like world war and frightened of, like, anything happening. And I was quite fearful...

The fearful presence of the Catholic Church has been given further prominence through more recent revelations of prolific and sustained child abuse, diminishing the Church's ability to speak with authority or higher moral certainty. This has lead Rafferty (2013) to question the future of Irish identities in a post-Catholic environment:

Apart from the Troubles, and the recent financial, melt down, no greater trauma has afflicted Irish society and Irish identity than the crisis in Catholicism produced by the clerical child sexual abuse scandal. Can we say that Institutional Catholicism as a force in Irish society is now at an end? Will the profession of the Catholic faith no longer be regarded as an essential component in the way in which the majority of Irish see themselves? Ireland has not been immune from the growing secularisation that has swept the industrialised West since the 1960s and perhaps for a good deal longer. (p. 17)

The coming of age of my subject group runs in parallel with the 'Troubles', the financial crises and the revelations of abuse. The "growing secularisation", surely associated with these traumas, has been undermining the power and influence of the Church for over 50 years. What impact this diminution of the Church has or will have on any fixed, fluid or constructed notions of 'Irishness' has not been established or attempted in this study. It would appear to me, certainly in terms of their lack of formal religious observance, that many of my second and third generation contributors see themselves inhabiting a post-Catholic space. Some ritualistic attendance in church is maintained through the natural cycles of births and deaths where, surprisingly perhaps, baptism still seems to hold some significance for the diaspora despite their antipathy to organised religion. This might be seen more as 'hedging your bets' in terms

of spiritual salvation than a clinging to any sense of authentic cultural identity. Looking back, there may indeed have been a cold-war scaremongering pervading our childhoods, not least through the British media, and compounded by the negativity, guilt and fear instilled in many people through the teachings of the Catholic Church. Though, as many of my contributors described, their youth was not characterized by a gloom-laden household in thrall to a pervasive and stifling faith. Fun, music and stories filled Tim's house which retrospectively encouraged him to consider if his father, who died when he was 10, had actually had more of an influence on him than he may have thought. His father also carried a much stronger affection for and affinity with Ireland and the Irish than his mother, of whom he says,

Tim: I kind of got the impression that my Mum, when she came over here, was, was glad that she got away from being in Ireland because I don't think she saw herself as having a future. I think she was quite ambitious and adventurous in that way...

This adventurous departure was not always well received, as Wills (2015) again observes:

The men and women who left Ireland in the 1950s were turning their backs on a bleak future, with little prospect of steady employment, or marriage and homes of their own. They were castigated for their folly in abandoning the purity of Irish rural life in favour of the dangers of urban society, and for their greed in daring to prefer a disposable income of their own to slaving for a pittance on the family holding. (p. 7)

The assimilationist position taken by some on arrival was not therefore adopted as a result of a lack of cultural or intellectual confidence but out of a desire to forget. Arriving in the land of the oppressor, with little in the way of formal education and going into service for middle class families in the UK, Tim suggests that his mother may have seen how others lived and become even more aspirational. Following the death of his father much of the 'Irishness', as far as he remembers it, left the house and as a direct result of the suggested cultural ambivalence on his mother's side and the loss of his father at an early age, Tim concludes,

Tim: I never really felt as Irish as some of my other friends were, even though I knew, you know, the Irishness is, is basically the stem of my family. She (his mother) wanted to get away from Ireland maybe. She wanted to start a new life and she was probably, you know, didn't often go back maybe, maybe my Dad was the Irish person in the family. He died when he was forty-six. I was ten, so then, you know, when you are formulating relationships with your father, particularly, about going out for a drink where you go to the Irish Club probably for the first time, or a pub that was Irish with all his friends, I didn't have any of that. So even when you're in your teens then and go into your twenties, my Irishness would have stopped because my Mum didn't want anything to do with the Irish.

Others however, have a different view, and one which was based more around happier memories of childhood associated with their parents and the undertaking communal, often Irish community based, activities.

Ellie: Oh, that going to Mass was a huge, huge thing within our house. It was Mass every Sunday, without fail, regardless had I been out the night before, you had to... And it was only very late on that I was allowed to like go to evening Mass. It was ten o'clock mass in the morning and that was it, you got up and you went and it was...

BOS: Till you left home or...?

Ellie: Um, yeah, I still went and I think a lot of that was out of respect for Mum and Dad as well. And faith was a huge thing for Mum and Dad, especially Mum... She got cancer and...she suffered with it but that was her one thing I think that, kind of, she focused on was her faith. Now ask me whether that was a positive thing or a negative thing, do you know what? I don't know because at the end of the day, if it made her feel better, then that was a good thing. But then even after that Dad always carried on and then I got married and I had the children and ended up moving in here with them, so we still went to Mass, you know, we'd get up in the morning and we'd go to ten o'clock Mass with him

This family ritual engaged young and old in communal aspects of religion, and facilitated entry to a world of Irish people that she is still in contact with today.

Ellie: ... that was a big thing, so when church was over and you would come out everybody would stand round and chat but you would kind of veer to the people that you knew so even when Mum and Dad had died, I would still veer to their friends.

Here again, we see the traditions, rituals and performances seen in so many households though by no means all, continue as the older generation went from Mass to the pub, gathering with Irish friends, before returning home for dinner - or in some cases not. More often than not however, Sunday Mass followed by a short trip to the pub or club (that was often attached to the church) was a common experience.

Bernard: My Mum and Dad still go [to church]. One of my sisters still goes but the rest of us haven't been for... I've not been since I was 14 I don't think... I remember doing all the little boy stuff, but then it was more because that's where everybody went I think rather than it being the religion being the important thing. We'd all meet there, and then there was the Irish club next door to the thing. Like most churches, they had the Irish club, go in there and then you'll all go back to someone's house then sort of thing. So I think it was more part of a cultural hub for them to meet.

These common performances permeated the generations and the geographies of England serialising what Cressey (2006) would describe as ritual scenes of 'ethnic belonging'. It was perhaps both because my father was a Pioneer<sup>74</sup> and therefore did not drink and my mother often worked behind a bar on Sunday afternoons, that we did not follow this approach in Teesside ourselves. On visiting relatives in York however, this was a common schedule; leaving Mass to go either to the Catholic Club or the INL (Irish National League) Club and it was of course in the Catholic club surrounded by all my mother's aunts and my parents and grandparents that I first remember encountering the discussion concerning my generation's claim to Irishness.

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<sup>74</sup> Total Abstinence Association, whose members see abstinence and prayer as methods of counteracting examples of 'excess', abuse and addiction in society. See <http://www.pioneerassociation.ie/>.



For many, the segue from a religious and spiritual performance of Irishness to a more secular performance was perhaps no more obviously to be found than in this transition from the church to the pub on Saturday evenings or Sunday mornings. Rituals that attached themselves to both venues might be reflected in the enactment of liminal sacraments such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals and notably perhaps in the celebration of St Patrick's Day. Although this has grown into an almost global celebration of 'Irishness', the day was always celebrated in my home parish with a well-attended dance in the small social club attached to the church. A visible 'costume' of St Patrick's day was the shamrock that often arrived from Ireland and was made available at the back the church following Mass. Walter (2008a) considers the significance of St. Patrick's Day parades in the UK wherein some of the strongest memories permeating the interviews was the receipt of objects from Ireland.

The regular arrival of these symbols contained the very clear message that second-generation children were part of the national Irish family and revealed a taken-for-granted assumption that they would accept this identity and be prepared to proclaim it publicly in Britain" (p. 195).

As well as proclaiming this allegiance to the world, the heightened visibility gained from wearing the shamrock also provided a level of disclosure and recognition to the Irish themselves - especially perhaps to children of Irish descent, who, as we have discovered in some areas of Manchester at least, were largely invisible to themselves.

Gerry: We used to always get badges sent over from my grandmother, the Irish badges. And you'd go in, and this is probably the first time I ever realised, my school friend who was Irish – because they all used to wear badges, the green strips with a gold harp on it or a bit of shamrock or something – and you didn't realise it. And there's all sorts of names and I never took any notice of the names until I went to school and it used to come on St Patrick's Day and then you realised 'oh I didn't know McDonagh, his parents were Irish' and O'Connor over there...'

BOS: And then you realised, perhaps I should have thought about O'Connor and realised!

Gerry: Oh I know I should have. But do you know what I mean, it was funny...

Michelle similarly remembers this both as marking the Irish out from others and making them recognisable to each other.

Michelle: Yeah, we used to get sent off, Mum always gave us like a badge or a bit of shamrock to wear in on the day and that's another day you could see all the Irish because they'd all have something green on as well.

Others had less engagement as Tim explained,

Tim: There were some, lots of Irish kind of families that would celebrate St Pat's Day and I would kind of... my Mum has always been the same. My Mum is always very... I don't know what the right word is and I don't think it's embarrassment... I just get a little bit uncomfortable about it, and a bit, I suppose a bit embarrassed about it, I've not really embraced it and she said, I feel exactly the same, and I wonder if she has then imposed her... feelings on me... I've spoken before about you know that kind of Plastic Paddy stuff, and I kind of, I've always disliked the people who kind of invent this kind of Irishness for themselves and, and embrace it and take it on board and all that kind of, that Irishness of, you know, stupid idiots who are all the craic and, oh, we'll put these ginger wigs on and all the Guinness hats. Aren't we hilarious, and I'm kind of thinking there's more to, honestly, the Irishness than that.

We considered earlier Foster's view on the diminution of Irish history and culture to the level of kitsch and in doing so the ignoring of "the real achievements of Irish high culture in the late twentieth century" (Foster, 2008. p.155). The conscious staging of Irishness through such activities promoted on and by St. Patrick's Day would in many ways no doubt support Foster's position and it has certainly found no support with Gerry either who cited the same Guinness hats as a tangible manifestation of toxic plasticity,

Gerry: I'll tell you one thing that used to really, really annoy me being Irish descent, it's other Irish descent people, is especially when it was St Patrick's Day and they used to don their Guinness hats and all this paraphernalia all related to drink. All we're good for is... I've often heard ordinary people

who aren't Irish 'oh you must be Irish, you go out drinking'. And it's really annoyed me because it was like a tunnel view of things. And even today now I see the younger kids who are probably just out of their teens when...and it annoys me, because that is not Ireland to me, that's just some commercialism that's just taken off.

For the sake of argument, we might here pervert Connerton's view that "even ephemeral codes of fashion can function as vehicles for cultural remembering" (in Counsell, 2009. p. 6) and charitably suggest such commercialised apparel now associated with St Patrick's Day may provide a gateway to cultural remembering and a recognisable facet of the celebration of cultural identity and cultural difference. However, it is less clear, to continue Connerton's through line, that such expressions of kitsch Irishness are actually "capable of conveying highly nuanced conceptions of a common history...reflect the past...recreate it, and effectively re-narrativise events" (in Counsell, 2009. p. 6). Adopting the fashions of a consumerised and mediatized Irishness is certainly one way of drawing attention to the negative stereotypes and negative portrayals of the Irish but also of encouraging accusations of being a Plastic Paddy. Discussion around this topic with my contributors was varied in tone and understanding. Sean and Niamh discussed their lack of interest and engagement in Irish clubs and music preferring the Post Punk and Indie scene that Manchester had to offer at the time. As they explained clearly to me:

Niamh: I think we didn't go in for the Irish scene because we were into music. We liked seeing live music - we would prefer to do that than go to an Irish club, that's what we would prefer to do.

Sean: It was a choice between going to see the Buzzcocks at the General, Big Tom and the Mainliners or Brendan Shine, and it was the Buzzcocks that would win every time.

Of a time in the mid-1980s when Sean was drinking in what he described as 'a working class Irish pub' he recollects,

Sean: It wasn't one of these Irish theme pubs, there was very little Guinness sold and it was weird because having left school and got a job and thinking I was king of the castle and walking in and seeing for me what was such a clear hierarchical system. You had first generation Irish, you know, in the jackets and their thumbs in the waistbands stood at the bar, and then you had... the guys who would have been three/four years older than me and they were the regulars there. And all of a sudden I've walked in, I was the new kid on the block and it was like 'get down there, behave yourself'. It was a proper Irish pub and a proper community pub and you knew you had to be on your best behaviour, you know, you could have, it was quite raucous at times but there was a certain code. And yeah, and it was in there that I bumped into lads who I used to go to school with and who I knew were from the same background as me and they all wore Celtic shirts and a lot, quite a few of them had adopted Irish accents and their nickname, the nickname...

Niamh: Plastic Paddies.

Sean: ...was plastic Paddies.

What is interesting throughout a number of the interviews therefore, is the idea that second generation Irish would call others Plastic Paddy. Campbell has described the term as, "fundamentally, a derisive allusion to the perceived inauthenticity of the second-generation's identification with Irishness" (Campbell, 2011. p. 7). Scully (2009) takes this a step further proposing that the term "came into common use as a term of abuse in the 1980s, when it was frequently employed by recently arrived middle-class Irish migrants" (p. 126) and was levelled at the second/third generation Irish in England. The inference that it was not only deployed as a distancing device from a perceived 'inauthentic' Irishness but also a distinction based on class is subsequently confirmed:

It would be over simplistic, however, to describe the term 'Plastic Paddy' as simply denoting differences of accent and birthplace. Rather, as explored by Mac an Ghaill and Haywood (2003) the common use of the term in "the discursive repertoire of the young elite workers who migrated from Ireland the 1980s and 1990s" led to the term being imbued with class and power discourses of an authentic Irishness. (Scully, 2009. p. 127).

That it is now utilised between the second-generation Irish themselves suggests that there are further degrees and hierarchies of Irishness. Niamh continued,

Niamh: I felt it was fake. I didn't like the fakeness of people trying to be something they're not. Why, you know... be who you are. I didn't like the fact that they were pretending putting on this accent that wasn't theirs.

Rachel similarly places the emphasis on those who adopt an Irish accent

Rachel: I think when you get these people who've got an Irish accent but they haven't lived in Ireland or they weren't born in Ireland, you just think, mmm, bit strange... probably think they're a bit of a fraud kind of thing, or a bit of a wannabe...

I asked her if, as a musician, she was connected to any Irish community groups and in response she unintentionally introduces the differentiating possibilities of the term Plastic Paddy to cover such identities:

Rachel: No, I'm not really into... a lot of people my age...sort of go to these dinner dances<sup>75</sup> and things like that. I'm not saying they're plastics or anything, but I'm not kind of into all that, you know what I mean.

Julia describes instances where it is not the adoption of the accent that identifies someone as Plastic but the use of language.

Julia: ... but sometimes you know if you hear somebody saying 'Grand' or 'the *craic*' or something, now I'm not too fond of using those words, it's like I'm wearing an ill-fitting suit. Would I say 'oh I had great craic', if I was in the presence of first... it depends who they were... I would feel uncomfortable about saying 'oh it was grand' or 'it was great craic' if I was around first generation educated Irish. I would feel a bit paranoid that they thought I was trying to be like them.

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<sup>75</sup> Here Rachel is referring to County Association Dinner dances. For a consideration of the history and role of such Associations see Scully. M. (2010).

The territory we might soon find ourselves in however, is that any expression of Irishness to use Rachel's earlier words, might put you in the 'wannabe' category. Julia remembers an occasion when living in London, which resulted in an insinuation that she may have been considered a Plastic Paddy herself.

Julia: ... they didn't call it to my face. These were good friends, but, and it was never something that was said, but it was something that you would sometimes see in a look or there might be a comment. I remember I, for a while I went out with a bloke from Cork... I said 'oh, how often do you go home, meaning how often do you go to Ireland' and he turned round to me and he was quite funny about it and he said 'well my home is here in Camden'. I had a group of friends who were first generation Irish, but they might go into Irish pubs they would never go near an Irish club and places... typically like the Galtymore in London, because they were the brain drain. They were the middle-class Irish, and I, I've thought about this a lot. I do think that to a certain extent there was a looking down on the second generation who celebrated their heritage, like in a way they thought you were trying to copy them.

Eamonn considered different degrees of 'plastic' within our discussion starting with an appreciation of how it could have been used to describe him in the early days of his broadcasting career,

Eamonn: ... being in a privileged position of being able to devise a radio programme, calling it *Come into the Parlour*<sup>76</sup> you know I was accused of being probably Stage Paddy rather than Plastic Paddy.

Eamonn described the origination of his arrival on to the radio show and the approach he wanted to take to it following the demise of its predecessor *Irish Line*.

Eamonn: The programme boss at the time phoned me up and he said, 'We really do need and want an Irish programme... I got accused by lots of people who'd been previously involved

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<sup>76</sup> *Come into the Parlour*. BBC Radio Manchester. First transmitted 1985. For one view of the introduction of this series (though not a definitive source) see <https://radicalmanchester.wordpress.com/2010/05/08/manchester-irish-in-britain-representation-group-part-2/>.

on others, of just dumbing down but I saw it very early, it was to celebrate the culture rather than... not that we didn't touch on politics, we did, but we dealt with it in an appropriate way and we got support from the newsroom and the BBC resources in order to cover it in the way the BBC were happy with and I was comfortable with. But essentially, I mean Come into the Parlour in retrospect is probably a bit stage Irish name isn't it, but I wanted it to be reminiscent of the storytellers, the singers, the dancers who would turn up in your parlour, and tell stories and sing and dance and have a drink and that. So it was about the culture, it was about Irish cultural life in Manchester and how the Irish community had benefited Manchester and was ingratiating itself within it and the two cultures were merging very successfully.

As a result of his less political motivations he considers that he might have been thought a stage Irishman rather than a Plastic Paddy. The distinction is interesting, given that both bring to the fore typical or expected behaviours and highlight them for comic or cultural effect. This again raises the possibility of tiers of legitimate performance that depend on the audience and the purpose for its acceptability. Furthermore, Eamonn confesses,

Eamonn: I have to admit, I do use that phrase as a kind of generic term of someone or something usually, trying to be Irish, you know, we went through a period and there's still lots of Irish bars knocking around but they were on every corner... put a shamrock up or they'd have a shillelagh<sup>77</sup> on the bar or a picture of a leprechaun or something. I think that's legitimate to call them Plastic Paddy's 'cos they were trying to cash in on a trend that was, that ironically had grown up in a place often where, you know, the Irish weren't wanted necessarily...

And when asked about his experience of hearing those Mancunians who had adopted Irish accents he recognized this immediately,

Eamonn: I've come across that...one of the most vociferous people...was the same as me, born in Wythenshawe, brought up in Wythenshawe...and then we'd go to these meetings about, 'we should be doing this, we should be telling this story, we should be doing an item on strip searching,' and I remember it distinctly...saying...'Just hang on a minute, you're as English

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<sup>77</sup> A walking stick made of Blackthorn wood or oak that could double as a weapon.

and as Irish as I am, we've both grown up within streets of each other, why do I sound like this and you sound as though you've just come out of County Mayo yesterday?' so I get that...

A further example with an added level of irony was outlined by the M sisters,

Michelle: People say it to me, people used to say 'Just because your parents are Irish, you're not Irish, you're a Plastic Paddy', of course it's been said. If you choose to take offence to it than that's up to you isn't it?

Ruth: You get it a lot around St. Patrick's Day especially in Manchester because people are moaning the fact that St. George's Day isn't celebrated...

Michelle: Well that's not our fault is it?

Ruth: I think people say it. It's been loads of generations back or something so you're not actually Irish... Dad got called a Plastic Paddy once but he laughed, he actually laughed, he found it hilarious because it was when he ran a club... there wasn't anything really for the Irish in this area and he started these Irish nights... It was [name removed] who is the same as us, was born in England, obviously Irish parents...

Mary: Has the strongest Irish accent I've ever heard.

Michelle: When he's had a drink, a feisty one, and he actually called Dad a Plastic Paddy.

Mary: I thought that would have upset Dad.

Ruth: No, he laughed.

Michelle: Considering Dad was born there and he wasn't even born there.

We find here perhaps the fairly unique situation of someone born in England adopting an Irish accent and calling someone Irish born a Plastic Paddy for putting on Irish nights in the social club he managed for the Irish of the community. This could of course be interpreted as either a quite superior level of complexity or a concerted attempt to cause offence.



The example described by Martin takes this in another direction, as he announces his dissatisfaction in those who adopt an Irish accent in an attempt to claim something to which they have no right:

Martin: It's just someone trying to pretend they're something they're not. If you're trying to pretend you're Irish when you've been born in England, I mean it's putting on a false accent and so on, the behaviour, and over-exaggerating things, and 'I was part of this' when you weren't part of that. You can admire people who have done what they've done or you can say 'oh it would be great to be able to... I was brought up in Ireland, I moved over here and made a life' and so on and so forth, and it is quite an achievement to uproot and establish a new life. But to pretend you've done that, or you're part of that circle, I think is not a great thing to do. I wouldn't make anything of someone doing it. It's kind of silly, you know, just silly.

It is wholly unacceptable in Martin's view to adopt the accent to imply that you are 'more Irish' than is actually the case. In doing so, you are not only claiming that you were born in Ireland but also that you suffered the same hardships as those who came as emigrants. That would make them at least disingenuous or worse, a fraud. Indeed, further to this, Martin was able to provide an example of something I had never heard of before,

Martin: Well I went out with my friend and there was a gentleman with us and he was speaking in an Irish accent... And I said 'it doesn't sound right that', he [his friend] says 'he's not Irish'. So I said 'oh were his parents from Ireland', he says 'no'. He says 'he's hung about with the Irish group', he just likes this Irish group and he's picked up this accent and tried to develop it himself. So he's an English bloke, not of Irish heritage. So I thought now that's proper Plastic Paddy.

The continuum of Irishness and therefore the continuum of plasticity stretches further than we first thought.

Finally, Gerry captures an essential difference between the Plastic Paddy as described by the contributions above and those who consider themselves to have pride in their heritage.

Gerry: ... it ties when I used to go to the Irish Club when everyone was dressing the same, old fashioned like their mums and dads. And I also class it the same as putting the Guinness hats on. And really I should look at it as just being a bit of fun, but these people sometimes even put on the accent and it just gets on my nerves... they'll say something like you'd expect your father to say in an Irish accent... it's not disturbing, I just think you're betraying... never betray where you come from but don't try and re-enact it, don't try and be a duplicate. And I think that's where the Plastic Paddy came from... that's my interpretation. But I don't dislike them, I just think 'hmm, you're letting people like me down', you're letting people who go about business and who are proud to be [Irish]... You know the famous writers, the musicians, the culture in itself, you know that sort of thing. I look at the big thing rather than just the obvious thing of down... I mean I love Guinness, don't get me wrong, but I'd never put a hat on to say so, do you know what I mean?

The identification with Irishness for many is therefore found in an internal identification rather than an external representation. Alternatively framed by Bourdieu as the *Habitus*, this presents as an “embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history [and] is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product” (Bourdieu, 1992. p. 56). Many of us may like Guinness for example and revel in cultural difference but would never literally put a hat on to say so.

Eamonn acknowledges too that there may be a middle ground in appropriating what may be considered idiomatically Irish expressions but which does not adopt or mimic the accent.

Eamonn: There's a mid-ground, you know... I've got some great friends who same as me, again Manchester people, but from a very Irish family. And they would have a turn of phrase that they have heard growing up all the time and they use it second nature. It's not an accent, it's just a turn of phrase...the word 'altogether' comes in it a lot, yeah, 'oh we had a great time, we had a great craic altogether, it was a great do altogether', English people don't say that, Irish people say it all the time. So English people growing up in an Irish household may have adopted it without realising it... osmosis.

The M sisters similarly pick up on this,

Ruth: I think you can tell somebody from Manchester, certain sayings or a certain way they talk that they will have some Irish in their background, I don't know what it is but sometimes I can recognise that.

Mary: Oh no, it's true. Somebody said something the other day and I said to P [her husband] 'that man's Irish' and he went 'How do you know?' I said 'He said *annie* instead of *eny*' [meaning the word 'any'].

I found it interesting when reading the transcriptions of the interviews, how and when particular words leapt from the page and spoke of an accumulated and possibly accidental Irishness. Eamonn suggests this is an acceptable form of appropriated Irishness in that it is unconscious and therefore not fabricated, fake or plastic. That you can see this and almost hear it as you read the transcripts is in itself illuminating and it prompts us to be aware that it can be equally in how something is said as much as in what is said that significance may be found. One might think it easier to appreciate this in the form of the spoken word and importantly hearing the spoken word, but it was genuinely surprising how easy it was to read into the contributors' responses a possible accidental Irishness, simply because of where they had used or positioned the word 'now' for example or use of the phrase 'fair play'. For the second-generation Irish this literal example of audial *pentimento* - a fragment of the past intervening to be heard in the authorial voice of the present - perhaps begins to claim the ground between accent, language and birthplace on a journey to finding their own unique space. Walter's (2008b) conclusion that accent works as an 'othering' device for both the English and the Irish remains valid describing,

The English try[ing] to secure the boundaries of the white nation by refusing to recognise the continuation of Irish ethnic difference beneath the veneer of an English accent. [whilst] The Irish deny authenticity even to the children of its core birth population in an attempt to shore up threatened national "purity". (in lfe. p. 212)

Care should nevertheless be employed here. Whilst the use of Irish idioms in everyday speech might for some evidence, however unconsciously, a

connection to or identification with Ireland, for others it will always provide evidence of a 'wanna-be' paddy. Accents nevertheless do play a major part in the contributors' retelling of their personal histories as they often break away from their own Mancunian accents in the retelling of stories from and about their parents and adopt Irish accents as though the authenticity of what is being said is reinforced by the accent in which it is delivered. This perhaps makes the stories feel more real and creates, ironically through the 'othering' of their voices, a point of connectivity between the audience, in this case me, and the performers. Whilst we may not hear our own parents' accents we certainly hear our friends' parents speaking in this way and whilst this may not necessarily take us back to Ireland it may take us back to the displaced Irelands of our "English" childhoods.

Although our childhoods were predominantly based in England, that should not obscure the fact that Ireland itself often provided the opportunity for iterations of Irishness to be tested and refined through ritual and performance. The lives of many of my interviewees were framed by summers spent in Ireland. Their year, beginning and ending at their parents' houses largely in rural parts of the west of Ireland, reflected the common experience that part of their summers at least would be spent in Ireland. For many this was the full summer, sometimes with both parents, sometimes with one, as the father would often travel back and forward whilst working. This framing of the year also provided the underpinning visual narrative for both idyllic and tortuous recollections of weeks spent on farms far away from the urban centre of Manchester. As we noted in Cressey (2006), it also provided the basis for cultural continuity, and reinforced a keen sense of ethnic belonging, built on tangible engagement with the land of their ancestors.

Brother and sister Sean and Niamh, recall a time visiting Ireland for a family wedding. The description helps set the scene and, simply told, paints a vivid picture of a child's encounter with an Irish family event.

Sean:           The kitchen was obviously the heart of the house  
and the reception was in there. And I remember being about, I

would have been about 10 and everybody was dressed up and the drink was flowing and cups of tea were being passed and Uncle James said “right” and he just pointed to whoever’s to his left and said ‘what about such a poem?’ And he, this guy next to him looked a proper rough-arsed farmer and he recited a beautiful piece and then it went anti-clockwise round the room. Someone would sing a piece, somebody would get up and dance, and everybody had respect for whoever was on the floor, no sniggering, nothing. And it was a proper eye-opener for me because at first I was quite uncomfortable.

Niamh:       What was your turn? What did you do?

Sean:       Hiding behind Mum! I was going nowhere. But yeah, it was a proper eye-opener, I’d never seen anything like it in me life. And...

Niamh:       We used to have to Irish dance a lot when we used to go visiting and me and my, two of my sisters did Irish dancing.

Sean:       So you were briefly a Plastic Paddy weren’t you?

Niamh:       Well I think I was. I think you can only be a Plastic Paddy once you’re an adult. I don’t think you can be *[laughs]* a Plastic Paddy as a child, and in my defence. So they would, you would go visiting relatives and they’d roll, push the settees back and you’d be like a dancing bear, you’d have to sort of, you know, get accordion out or whatever, put music on and you’d be dancing for them. And they did this at weddings and stuff and yeah, you would just be, you’d have to just I suppose make your parents proud. That’s what you were there to do sometimes.

And these performances of Irishness were quite possibly just that. A way to make your parents proud through a tangible evidencing of cultural continuity and identity consolidation. A proof to those that remained that they, our parents, had not lost their claim to being Irish, and that by extension the second generation were as Irish as our cousins. Indeed, that we were perhaps ‘more Irish’ in some ways than they were.

The M sisters have a wealth of stories about their trips to Ireland but some of the most poignant for me are the shorter reminiscences which clearly place the significance of Ireland to them growing up as central to their lives. They describe simply a game they played as children,

Ruth: I remember we used to play a game didn't we, in cardboard boxes and all sorts and we used to pretend, this is obviously when we were like six, seven and eight and nine, we stopped playing it by the time we got to 15, pretend we were in a box, on a boat, on the ferry, we used to play this game that we were going...

Mary: I used to get the night sailing didn't I?

So simply and vividly recalled down to the detail of the night sailing which in reality, as Sean's earlier recollection indicated, was not as exciting or romantic as it sounds. Arriving in Ireland, their experiences occasionally resulted in further disappointment:

Mary: you know if we went over to stay, you know, like to see... our cousins in Ireland and we would go to Ireland and we would want to go to a club that was playing Irish music...

Michelle: Traditional music, yeah.

Mary: I would, that would be the point of going over, I'd want to be listening to the fiddle and the bodhran or whatever, whereas they'd be taking me to a proper club and go to a club with music and I'd be like 'Well what's the point of that? I can do that in Manchester'. But they probably, you know, like in our head they wouldn't, (their cousins) they wouldn't have sat there on a Sunday afternoon listening to the Wolfe Tones and the Dubliners...

Mary: I think the music and the songs have had a big part of our life... music, songs, alcohol...

Further cultural continuity has not been as smooth however

Mary: I was thinking about my children and whether or not, how much has it influenced them as opposed to say yours [looking to Ruth]. I think yours have possibly been influenced more, partly because they're older but mine also because I'm married to P who's from Belfast and a Protestant I consciously try not to... there are certain songs that, whilst I have all the Wolfe Tones and things in my record collection, I wouldn't play them in front of the kids because I don't think it's really very fair...

Ruth: No, if they start singing it.

Mary: ... though... they do quite like *Some Say the Devil is Dead and Buried in Killarney*<sup>78</sup> and they love that song and I didn't realise, you know, how much they knew it until I heard them singing it to P (their father) bear in mind his father was in the British Army, which is probably not, you know, anyway, that's probably not the best thing. But then Caitlin she loves going to the Irish Festival and she would know the words that you know, she'd sing.

Michelle: Last time in Ireland she sat up at the bar, how old was she? She sat up at the bar basically and sang some Irish song word for word. Do you remember she just sat there and sang it on her own.

My childhood experiences and those of the M sisters, Sean, and Niamh clearly evidence similarity. The pleasure of being allowed to sit on a high stool at a bar in Ireland whilst not even being allowed in a pub in England can never be over romanticized in reflective discourses of difference. In this regard, the county you were from was largely irrelevant although the experience of many was movement from a rural part of Ireland to a more urban English environment which further highlighted senses of difference.

Carolyn describes her parents' home place,

Carolyn: It was very much rural Ireland, you would go back to the farm...

BOS: Was this your Mam's side or your Dad's side

Carolyn: Mum's side and my Dad's side. And there it was just, you played out in the fields, it's that idyllic scene of chasing the chickens and riding the donkeys and sliding down haystacks all that type of thing which was very different from Salford streets. You used to just absolutely love it and we'd go back to my cousin's house. They had nine children already and us six would go back and stay there as well, so there's a house full and we just got on with it.

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<sup>78</sup> *Some say the Devil is Dead*. Song popularized by the Wolfe Tones in the 1970s. Appears on their *Belt of the Celts* LP. Triskel Records TRL1003 1978. (chorus - Some say the devil is dead, the devil is dead, the devil is dead, Some say the devil is dead and buried in Killarney. More say he rose again, More say he rose again, More say he rose again and joined the British Army).

BOS:            You stayed with them as well?

Carolyn:        Oh, we'd stay with them, yeah, yeah, you had to stay, 'cos that was home, that was my Mum's home. You *had* to stay there, and my Mum's sister-in-law *had* to put you up, do you know what I mean

Bernard recalls things differently however and although the insinuation is that in his early years he enjoyed it a little more, his mid-teens were spent undertaking hard labour.

Bernard:        We went to Ireland every year up until 16. We had to go for six weeks, and that part from about 13 to 16 I used to start disliking it. Because at that age I was into hanging round street corners with all your mates, and being put on a farm in the middle of nowhere...and the next nearest house was a mile and a half away, so it was one of those, and when you went there you worked on the farm you didn't go for a holiday. You'd be milking, bringing cows out of a field at 5 in the morning. And to me I'd rather be sat on the street, 'I've got my Adidas on here, I don't want to be stood in a field telling a cow to move!'

Martin similarly remembers working on his uncle's farm for the summer months,

Martin:        Yeah, we stayed at my Dad's home place which ...is quite isolated. [It's] not a big place anyway and we were about 7 miles out [of town] and it was a proper farm, so we'd have the cows and we'd have the wheat and the beet and stuff and doing the cocks of hay. I think that the only thing that's changed possibly is, you'd say, the isolation. Because when we first went over to Ireland it was like stepping back in time, even the things that you took for granted here, fashions and all kinds of things, it seemed 'hang on we've not got this here, it's not caught on...' I'm not saying you felt as though they were backward in Ireland but it did seem to be a little bit more, I don't know, they weren't taking on the new technology and so on as fast as we were...

And yet unlike Bernard above, his feelings about it were very positive throughout.



Martin: I went over once actually with Bernard... might have been 15 or 16, around that age, and we went over together. He was going to Galway, or just before Galway as I was going just after Galway and we went together, the pair of us, just 'off you go lads', yeah. But we were trusted a lot more. And you did feel safe in Ireland to be honest, even as a young lad you felt safe, even if we got lost you didn't feel vulnerable, you could approach someone and... The daft thing was, I used to go walking... a good 6 or 7-mile walk, nearly every car would pull over to give you a lift and occasionally I'd take a lift, and they'd know more about my family than I did when I was younger, yeah.

This reflects the experiences of many second-generation Irish returning to the rural homes of their parents, and indeed we will hear Steve Coogan draw on this sense of the familial and the familiar to inform his story telling in Chapter 6. Bernard similarly recalls,

Bernard: Years ago, I went to Ireland... went in the summer of '81 when all the riots were on over here and my Mum and Dad got rid of me and I went over on my own, and as I got off the bus in the town where I was from, the farm's about 4 miles out so I'd set off walking. And this car came up behind me and pulled over and went 'quick, jump in'. And so I sort of went to this bloke 'yeah alright', got in. And he went to me 'are you going to the farm' and I went 'yeah, yeah'. So as we were driving along he went 'how's your dad?' I says 'he's fine'. And he says 'how's everything?' And I was going 'great, great'. And after that I went to him 'sorry I don't know your name' and he said some name, I said 'have you been sent to pick me up?' And he went 'no'. So I said 'OK, who do you think I am?' And he went 'oh you're definitely either Mike's or Pat's son' he goes 'you said you're going out to the farm', and I went 'yeah, how do know that'. And he goes 'I could tell from the back and the way you were walking that you were one of [that family]'.

Niamh and Sean's experiences of Ireland were not always as positively memorable however.

Niamh: We used to go regularly (to Ireland) when we were growing up, we'd always go in the six-week's holiday for anywhere between, you know, two or three weeks to sort of four or five weeks.

BOS: And did you always stay with the family while you were over there as well?

Niamh: No. We'd sort of make our own, when we were growing-up we would stay in like a caravan, more often than not it would be a caravan or...

Sean: There was a big, big static caravan we stayed in for a few years. Before that there was an old thatched cottage which sounds incredibly romantic, truth of the matter it was, it was...

Niamh: No running water, no electricity, no toilet, you know.

Sean: Yeah, it was a nightmare.

Niamh: Nine of us in that. That doesn't sound much of a holiday!

Sean: Yeah. It was proper, it was an open fire so if you wanted a cup of tea you had to boil this big black kettle hanging over the fire. If you wanted water for it you had to walk 200 yards...

Niamh: Down to a well.

Sean: ... down the road to a well and pull out a bucket of fresh water. And, you know, anytime I go to Ireland I always make a point of driving up there and having a look at it. I've got a photograph of it at home and it's in a right state of dilapidation, yeah.

Niamh: But that's the house...

BOS: It's still there though, the place is still there is it?

Sean: Just about. Just about.

Similarly, I can remember visiting my great grandmother in her house in the West of Ireland during a family holiday split between my father's home town in West Cork and my mother's family in Co. Mayo. In 1984, the house was exactly as described above and when we asked where the toilet was we were told 'there's acres of it out the back'. Familiarity with such Irish experiences and with Ireland, its history and geography more broadly, is significant in terms of its enabling position for Irish allegiance and claims to authenticity. For Julia,

this had professional benefits as her writing drew directly on knowledge of both Ireland and England for its verisimilitude and resonance. “My book”, recounts Julia, “was a kind of entry into that, erm, Irish, tight Irish community in South Manchester”. Accurate knowledge of the two recognizable locations of Mayo and Manchester enabling her to gain an additional level of visibility with the Irish and Irish community groups in Manchester. Ironically, she describes that acceptance of her Irish credentials was perhaps easier than any initial Mancunian alignment.

Julia:           Because of my book, I have got to know more people and I must say because... my book is set in Manchester and Mayo I was quite overwhelmed by the way they adopted the book and me by default really... and an interesting thing is that there are some Manchester Irish I find who will, are a bit kind of, ‘she’s not a Mancunian’. That’s what they object, they don’t care about the Irish bit. It’s the Manchester. You know they kind of, ‘she’s from Wigan’, you know, ‘how dare she’ [*Laughs*].

This alignment with regional identity is very much linked to the whole question of identity for many, my contributors included. Foreshadowing Terry Christian’s similarly expressed view that we will hear more of in Chapter 5, Johnny Marr<sup>79</sup>, alongside Morrissey the creator and guitarist of the distinctive sound of *The Smiths*, similarly makes clear “I don’t consider myself either [Irish or English] ... I hate nationalism of any kind. I feel absolutely nothing when I see the union Jack, except revulsion... and I don’t feel Irish either. I’m Mancunian-Irish”. (Campbell, 2011, p. 102). Notwithstanding that ‘revulsion’ is not ‘nothing’, a number of my contributors came to this conclusion during our discussion too. But as Julia indicated above, identity can be as much about reception as it is the performance and as Jenkins (1996) notes “through an internal-external dialectic, involving a simultaneous synthesis of internal self-definition and one’s ascription by others” (p. 20).

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<sup>79</sup> Marr’s biography on his official website proclaims “Born in Manchester...of Irish heritage, Marr’s earliest memories are the get-togethers of his extended family perhaps...dancing himself out of the womb to the traditional strains of Black Velvet Band”.

The issue of self-ascription is key to these discussions so I asked all of my contributors how they would describe themselves, in terms of their identity and affiliations. For some there was a very simple answer to the question of precisely what might define their overriding sense of Irishness. Almost comically Ruth suggested, “The fact that nobody else in the family was English” and of course this majestically simple observation should not be too readily overlooked.

Eamonn was similarly untroubled in his response but did acknowledge, albeit in rejecting it, a tension.

Eamonn: I don't have any worries about any conflicts, I had been born in Manchester and brought up in England. I'm English with an Irish heritage... I don't think it's complicated.

For many others, it clearly was not as uncomplicated as either Eamonn or Ruth suggest. Ellie, whilst considerate of her English birthplace, was very clearly drawn towards her Irish heritage,

Ellie: If I was really honest I'd probably veer more towards the Irish side than I would the English side... I've got dual citizenship.

BOS: So do you have an Irish passport?

Ellie: Yeah.

BOS: Or you have both?

Ellie: Yeah. And the kids do as well so they've got... it was well before Dad died, I applied for citizenship for the five of us, so we've got both. So I always joke with James, if he ever played football, who would he play for? *[Laughs]*. He never quite answers it for me!

BOS: So if someone asked you then what nationality you were, what would you say?

Ellie: I find that a really difficult question to answer sometimes. Like the kids in school, [Ellie is a primary school teacher] if they said where did they think I was from, they would say Ireland but that's because I talk about it such a lot to them,

so. Do you know what, it depends on who I'm talking to, I think if I'm really honest. So Irish descent I would say a lot of the time because that's what I am.

Martha describes herself with similarly strong leanings,

Martha: I would say half Irish and half English, but I think the half Irish would come first.

BOS: So if you were filling in a form...

Martha: I'm British.

BOS: And on census forms or other such forms where you could tick the White Irish box....

Martha: No I put British. But you see I also think I'm European, I don't think I'm English. I don't like the word 'English' I'll be honest. I prefer British and I'll go European, but inside... I think I'm prouder to be half Irish than I am to... I'm not even half English, I'm English aren't I? I'm prouder of being half Irish than I am of being English.

The confusion coming through people's responses is detectable as they think through them out loud for the recording. Martha moves from considering herself strongly identifying with her 'Irish half' and yet a few moments later considers herself wholly English whilst still leaning towards her Irish heritage. Her words however, evidence an equally strong anti-English sentiment, as much as a strong pro-European, pro-Irish sentiment. There is little pride in saying she is English but a fierce pride in her Irish heritage. For Martha, this may have been partly fuelled by the loss of her Irish born mother at an early age and being brought up by her English born, but Catholic father. (Interestingly, the opposite of Tim's experience). A definitive pull towards what had been lost and what might have been was felt when she met with the Irish side of the family. More broadly, a number of insightful considerations of Irish diasporic identity in relation to the British census have been undertaken. Willis

(2016) considers Lievesley's "phenomenon of 'ethnic group switching'<sup>80</sup> in the second generation. That is, white Irish mothers [were] found to assign British ethnicity to their children who had been born in Britain." (para 16). Concluding that, "unlike the identification as Irish-Americans after several generations, white Irish ethnic identity is not automatically passed down after migration to Britain" (para 16). Willis' article closely scrutinises the implications of a white Irish ethnicity and, in contrast to a British-Asian experience, suggests that "ethnicity in the census is really about skin colour and country of birth, and less to do with cultural affiliation". She goes on to note, "For the second-generation white Irish, it is the very fact of their whiteness that allows their Irishness to be forgotten." (para 17). Hickman draws on Ang (2001) to suggest another reason for the reluctance to tick the white Irish box: "A major critique of census categories has been that using the data produced by such questions has inherent problems not least because there can never be a perfect fit between fixed identity labels and hybrid personal experiences." (Hickman 2010, para 5). There is no doubt in my mind that the privilege of 'whiteness' contributes significantly to identity negotiation and formation, and the experiences described by my contributors evidence at times Ang's well observed 'imperfect fit' between census category and experience. It also appears that Irish ethnic identity has been passed on, or at least attempted to be passed on, following migration to Britain through the rituals and performances of Irishness that my contributors describe. This in turn however, contributes to the continuing imperfect fit described above.

Martha: I always felt Irish. In fact if we have Ireland versus England on the football we always end up having a row in here because I will support Ireland every day. I don't know, I just feel more Irish than English if that makes sense?

BOS: Yeah, I mean it can and I'm interested in where that influence came from though?

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<sup>80</sup> See Lievesley, N. 2010. *The Future Ageing of the Ethnic Minority Population of England and Wales*. London: Centre for Policy on Ageing and the Runnymede Trust.

Martha: I don't know. I suppose part of me, because I suppose I did love my mother so much, because I lost her at an early age and you've got this... maybe it might be a distorted image but to me she was absolutely fantastic, and I suppose I wanted to be like her... and I suppose that would encompass being Irish... Every time I met any of the Irish they were absolutely lovely, and I think that's what I yearned for as a child. And I could feel... I can say I could feel the pull from my mother, when she went home to Ireland it was difficult for her coming back. So I think instinctively I took that on, that Ireland was better, the Irish family were nicer and kinder and more loving as it were, which was important to me as a child.

So, out of a real sense of loss came a real sense of belonging and identity.

When discussing this question with Bernard his initial response was quite clear,

Bernard: I would never describe myself as English but I would say I was British but with Irish heritage. I couldn't say English, there's something about that connotation to that word, I don't know what it is. As I say, we've had this discussion recently where I just can't see how... to me there's too much connotation in the word 'English' but 'British' has a little less ring to it sort of thing. I would also put the bit in 'of Irish heritage'.

Later in our discussion we returned to this question where Bernard's response became further refined:

Bernard: I would never say I was Irish, I would never say I was English, I would say I was a Manc who was from Britain with Irish heritage. So it's a mix of it. It's a hard position to be in.

Those with strong family ties both in England and Ireland, and particularly perhaps those who identified strongly with being of an Irish family, as children were closer in general to Christian and Marr's position as the M sisters position captured:

BOS: How do you describe yourself now? For example, you know formally, if you fill in a form, a questionnaire, if you're going for a job,

Michelle: I actually put, I always, even though I don't want to, I always want to put 'white/Irish' but I always 'white/British'.

Mary: Yeah, I put 'white/British'

Michelle: Because I think my passport, my birth certificate, I just think it's easier to do it that way even though every time I do it, I want to do... I'd actually rather be Irish than English.

Mary: Yeah, I'd rather be Irish than English... On a form I would say I was white/British because that's what you have to say but if somebody, say I met you and you know, we were having a chat and you just said 'And where are you from?' I would always class myself as being from Manchester, rather than from England, and being from Irish parents so... I'd just say 'I'm from Manchester but my parents are Irish', and I would always include that in the same thing.

The same sentiment was expressed by many of my contributors.

Gerry: I've heard the phrase [Manchester Irish], I've not used it myself... I've not actually discussed it saying Manchester-Irish, but I'd definitely say I'm Manchester. Probably I'm Manchester more than anything, more than say being English or British or anything. It's something I can identify on my own without any influence, I'm from Manchester and that's it. And if I was pressed even further on it I'd probably say... I can't really say if I'm English or British because I still have this conflicting loyalty thing that cancels each other out. So I always go into saying 'well I'm British but from an Irish background'.

Martin similarly takes this view but with even further emphasis on his Mancunian roots and continues this theme to locate his son, third generation, differently,

BOS: ... the Manchester identity I guess important to you. I mean you said you're Mancunian and your Dad used to say that to you?

Martin: I think so, yeah, I think the Manchester identity is the big one for me, but I do hold on to the Irish roots and even



if England were playing Ireland in a football match I would be supporting Ireland. And we've had it here with my son, my son would have the England flag on his window and I'd have the Irish flag on my window, you know when the World Cup was going a couple of years ago and Ireland did really well. But if he said 'am I English' then I'd say 'oh you're English, you've been born here' you know, it's third generation so to speak...

Later I asked,

BOS:           So would you call yourself English then?

Martin:       Yeah that's a funny one, yeah, I'm a Lancashire lad. Yeah, it's a tricky one – would I call myself English? Well I suppose I am but I'd say I've got more of a connection with Ireland than I have with England with the way I behave and friends I have and my outlook on life, I think it's more Irish than it is English.

And yet a minute earlier he had also decided,

Martin:       No I wouldn't say I'm true Irish, that's the thing, that's why I don't think I got any issues in Ireland, I didn't try to be Irish, I wasn't trying to be anything I wasn't, I'm of Irish descent but I'm a Manchester lad.

Clearly again, Martin relegates the English or even British nomenclature in favour of positioning himself squarely as Manchester and then Irish. When pushed, the tensions and uncertainties surface momentarily but subside just as quickly and a clarity of understanding is reached.

One of the third-generation Irish contributors was clearer on her alignment with being English but identified the absurdity she felt when, because of her line of work, this was challenged.

Rachel:       I would say I'm English, yeah. And I'm proud I'm from Manchester when I play Irish music and it's dead funny 'cos you're playing in sessions, I got it even last weekend, and this guy comes up and says 'where's your parents from?' And I was like 'Manchester' and he was like 'no, luv, where are they from?' And I was like 'Manchester'. [and he says] 'Where are they from? Where are their folks from'?

BOS: Oh, so it was like him who was trying to dig to find out where the connection was?

Rachel: Yes, told him both born in Manchester. They were only going across to Ireland and he'd say that, both from Manchester, yea, they're like 'What!'

BOS: And what sort of reception does that get then?

Rachel: I think they want to know where you're from in Ireland, you know, yeah.

BOS: And do you find then you have to go back and tell them about your grandparents or that connection?

Rachel: Yeah, you'd have to say they're from Galway, me Mum's family were from Galway and Wexford. They'd say 'oh, right, right, right, that's okay. That's fair enough'. [Laughs]

BOS: That's enough, sort of thing.

Rachel: Yeah, just needs the name.

Interesting, a little later in our conversation, Rachel shed more light on her appreciation of her affinity and affiliation with Manchester beyond it being her place of birth, blending this more regional or even local positioning with a strong cultural tradition recognized on both sides of the Irish Sea if not further afield.

Rachel: I just love being from Manchester anyway. I'm quite proud you know. And like what I was saying before, a lot of really good Irish musicians are from out a Manchester, so I love that side of it. Yeah.

This chimes with Kjeldsen's study<sup>81</sup>, (that as I write is currently in progress) that seeks to establish the case for a particular Manchester Irish sound in the performance and interpretation of traditional Irish music and which might allow

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<sup>81</sup> Svend Kjeldsen. 'Mancunian Irish: Musical Hybridization and Cultural Intimacy'. For further information see <http://www.irishworldacademy.ie/kjeldsen-svend/> (retrieved 17.02.17).

me to conclude that Rachel is proud of her Manchester roots precisely because of the kudos associated with the quality of Irish music and musicians that come out of Manchester. Her Manchester identity is, therefore, clearly given recognition because of its Irish underpinning (and in this case possibly vice versa).

Of all of the conversations I had with second-generation contributors, only one indicated a clearer affiliation with Englishness than Irishness. A discernible ambivalence towards their Irish upbringing and experiences appeared to permeate this conversation, though when re-reading the transcript, the humour of the situation shines through much more clearly. The relative poverty of my contributors' childhoods, though not discussed directly, should not necessarily be discounted when considering some of their responses too. When discussing the common ambivalence of the second generation to the English national football team Niamh and Sean responded:

Niamh: ... this is what I didn't like about the Plastic Paddies, they wouldn't support, they'd support Argentina over England yet they were living in England. They were British and...

Sean: I didn't get it. I never got it.

Niamh: I was quite, it just, I just didn't get it. They were like, um, you know, I can get if Ireland are playing England they'll support Ireland. I can get that, but I don't get supporting Argentina over your home country. I didn't get that and I still don't get that. But yeah, anti-English when you're half English, half Irish, it's uncomfortable at best.

BOS: And is that how you would class yourself as half English, half Irish?

Niamh: Yeah, I think so. I'd probably...

Sean: English blood, Irish heart (sic) going back to Morrissey. Yeah, I'm English and Irish stock.

Niamh: Yeah. Irish descent, yeah.

BOS: ...is there any situation where you have to think about what box you tick for nationality or ethnicity or...?

Sean: No, not at all, not at all...No, English. English.

Niamh: Yeah.

Sean: English.

BOS: And you're comfortable with English? Do you differentiate between English and British and Irish?

Niamh: I would veer more to English than Irish.

Following other interviews with second-generation Irish this came as a surprise, but then as a codicil to this section, Sean brought us back to more familiar territory.

Sean: Uh, maybe I find it easier saying I'm English because I love Manchester as much as I do. If I didn't love Manchester I might think 'oh, do you know something, I'm going to claim a bit of Irish heritage instead'. But I love Manchester so I'm claiming English.

Despite, his earlier claims to a leaning towards an English identity, Sean's overriding passion lay firstly with Manchester and this then guided them towards an English affiliation. The affinity with the regional identity discussed at points throughout this thesis conversely flagged the importance of this regional identification as distancing technique from being considered English or British and as a precursor to the Irish identifier resulting in a London Irish, Birmingham Irish, Glasgow Irish or even Manchester Irish identifier. I should point out however, that amongst those that I engaged with as part of this study, 'Manchester-Irish' was a less widely recognised descriptor. Interestingly, Sean's position suggests that if he had come from somewhere else less well-regarded globally, his affinity with Manchester nurtured by his love of music which the city provided for through the 1970s, 80s and 90s, he might have had less of a regional identity and a stronger Irish leaning. Once again suggesting that by accidents of birth there can never be a perfect fit between fixed identity labels and hybrid personal experiences." (Hickman 2010, para 5). Though this is of course supposition. What it does perhaps suggest is that the strength of the habitus has allowed the creation of a new *Heimat* for some within a very

short space of time, actually within one generation. The internalising of the emigrant dialectic coupled with a strength of identification with the region creates a hugely significant physical and emotional attachment. This may not be true of all regions but may account for the strength of such syncretic identities as London, Birmingham and Manchester Irish to become the home for individualised diaspora spaces, internalised yet rooted in the regions.

If the question of whether they were English or Irish was proving difficult to articulate, the question of how 'Irishness' might be defined was equally, if not even more, elusive. It undoubtedly transcends any connection to a place of birth as none of my contributors were born in Ireland, yet some still felt very much 'Irish'. In this context, what does it mean to be Irish? Can 'Irishness' be characterized - what is a sense of 'Irishness'?

For some, it was quite nostalgic.

Carolyn: ... it's very much that sort of warm comfortable feeling that you associate your childhood, I think 'cos I feel that I had a very good childhood, and very comfortable, very, just yeah everything was fine, we had holidays in Ireland, we didn't have everything, but we had everything, you know... It's that comfortable, pleasant feeling, I suppose. Things you associate with sort of a happy time in your life where you felt very safe and cared for and everything was just fine, and I think maybe as you get older and get through life and you start to, things get more challenging or more difficult, you want to try and connect with that pleasant, easy time, I don't know.

For Ellie too the idea of family plays a huge part. Closeness and connectivity being a big part of being Irish, but her view is less nostalgic than Carolyn:

Ellie: It was always a warmth of the Irish, you know how people would say the warmth of the Irish but they'd always make you feel welcome. Well that was my thing of it but because of family and I am very family-orientated. I'm still very very close to cousins and like my first cousins, they've all had children and it's like we still, like mine are still really close to them, you know. We still go over, like we're going over in the summer so we'll still go over but we don't see each other as like first or second

cousins or anything, we're just cousins and that's it, we're family.

Tim moves away from family to a more simple and broad friendliness. Perhaps because his understanding of Irishness comes through his friendship groups rather than through his parents following his father's death when Tim was ten years old.

Tim: For me it's always been, and people give a far better answer than I will, but for me Irishness has always been friendly. I've always just thought friendliness. I went and did a little tour to find out where my Dad was from... and I remember being stood outside this, we were trying to gauge this place from a picture that I had, and actually the people opposite invited us in and told us all about this place and I, you know, and even over here, when I've been over here, when we go into somebody's house it was always friendly...

Bernard picks up on these themes of friendliness and family ties,

Bernard: Our family was always about making sure you have a good party, have a good time sort of thing was one of the things... always family orientated. I've got three members of my family living here in Manchester, one lives down on the south coast. We meet up and we're quite in touch a lot, so family's important, a big issue for it. And being able to rely on each other when you need to, everyone who is in our family – like every family – has had issues and every time everyone's rallied round, so it's the big sense of family protects each other... It's the idea of being social, always having... I mean my last two girlfriends have both been, as it turned out the same as me, Irish descent, and again every time I've gone into their families it's always been the same thing, there's always been a big meet up at least once a month where everyone makes sure that everyone's alright.

Interesting to note too Bernard's disclosure that his last two girlfriends have both been of Irish descent. Pressing him on this revealed that it was these last two relationships (following a much lengthier relationship) that began his movement back towards his Irish roots.

Bernard: the first, I was just getting back into going to Ireland when I met her sort of thing, but she was 'what are you

doing going over to Ireland?’ Whereas the second one wasn’t, she was ‘ooh let’s go back to Ireland’ because she was in the same stage as me... her ex-husband... came from an Irish family as well sort of thing, and this woman came from an Irish family. So I’d got back into going back to the Irish Centre... I went down to there and that was massively, all those who I used to hang around with years ago... We were there 25 years ago and....I was going ‘you haven’t moved on’, they went ‘we’ve only been coming for 2 years because obviously it was just normal music in there, it wasn’t Irish music played, but again it was in that same community.

Conversely, Bernard also highlighted what he saw as a negative trait of the Irish in Manchester too.

Bernard: I think a lot of communities when they move out of one and go to another country they go very protective and very insular and they look after each other, but they stick to their values from when they left. So my Mum and Dad’s, and the community of ours, I felt their values were a bit older. When I went to Ireland they were open, I mean with my auntie you could discuss drugs, she’d be talking about heroin ‘oh they’re on heroin down the road’, whereas if that would be said to my Mum and Dad they’d be going ‘what?’. Those sort of things weren’t talked about. So I think the community in Ireland moved on, I think just here it became quite protective and quite insular.

From another perspective, this response, or lack of, may simply be an aspect of family loyalty, protectiveness and support that he introduced as a positive trait. Sean and Niamh similarly commented on a great sense of friendliness but with an openness that contradicts Bernard’s view of the Irish being more insular. Though Bernard is talking specifically about the Irish in England and not the Irish in Ireland at this point.

Niamh: What I think is kind of, Irishness to me is they seem to have a philosophy where they embrace the person... I think less inclined to judge people on what they do, what they live in, what they drive, what they’re wearing. They seem to be more, um... Warmer I would say, have a natural charm I would say. Am I making any sense?... Then adversely you get Irish snobs and...

Sean: That’s what I was hesitating for because...

Niamh:        you do get...

Sean:         ... there's a complete contrast to that.

Niamh:        There is a contrast to that, Irish snobs and there's nothing more hateful than an Irish snob and we know some. I'm, I am talking generally there's a warmth, there's a charm, and it's really, really quite heart-warming... I'm thinking when, you know, like last time I was in Ireland with you and you're just sat there in this hotel, we don't really know anyone and it's just a really nice, you know that you could go up to anybody and people would just chat away and you'd feel quite at ease wouldn't you with people? I think they just have an easy way I would say, it's just an easy way about them.

Sean:         Yeah and it can appear, they've got a way of disarming you and appearing unsophisticated but really could leave you for dead, you know, there's a sharpness there.

Niamh:        There's an understated-ness with...

Sean:         Yeah. There's modesty.

Niamh:        Yeah.

Sean:         Modesty maybe.

Interesting to note here too, that Sean and Niamh were the only contributors to consistently use the identifier 'they' when describing Irishness. Thus, they describe Irishness as 'other' and something that exists at a distance from themselves. When asked the same question, others used the term 'the Irish' which, out of context, might appear as a distancing grammatical device but in conversation they had clearly contextualised and positioned themselves within the classification of 'the Irish' and some drew directly on descriptions of their family life and experiences to illuminate traits and characteristics of Irishness, and some used the term 'we'.

Julia draws together a number of these ideas together and adds humour as a much talked of character trait of the Irish and what might define Irishness.

Julia:         Well you never like to generalise, do you, you feel kind of ignorant generalising about kind of nations as such, but... for Irish I would, I am surprised if I meet an Irish person



who doesn't have a sense of humour. I would say humour, warmth, possibly a certain sharpness of mind. But you know, there are lots of... and interestingly this is possibly the difference between the young Irish... in terms of character. That kind of, before the boom and bust, that kind of never been on time, laid-back, *laissez-faire* attitude, just absolutely not there at all... on the negative side I think they are very materialistic and possibly a bit dismissive... A kind of snobbery there that wasn't before, you know, I don't know if they've got, if they're suddenly getting a class system...

For Julia, Ireland, the Irish and by extension presumably, 'Irishness', is changing. Globalisation and materialism is affecting the way of life and those older agrarian times, governed by the seasons, rather than the clock, have perhaps been replaced by a faster paced and less relaxed attitude to life and an increased materiality. Generating the most in terms of discussion on this topic by far, was the idea of religion, as exemplified in Mary's response:

Mary: I think you can't separate, for me, you can't separate Irishness also from Catholicity (*sic*), you know from religion... I'm not saying any of us are particularly devout or religious but going to church, stop sniggering Michelle, going to church and observing the customs of religion like baptism or like communion, confirmation. We've all been involved in those but I would say they're more to do with our cultural links between religion and Irishness than they are real faith. I couldn't separate being a Catholic from being Irish if that makes sense... They kind of go together for me, you know, I don't think one's more powerful than the other either for me, they're kind of quite intermixed really.

What we have touched on variously throughout these broader discussions are undoubtedly notions of displacement and difference, intimacy and distance. The intimacy of the family often being seen as a positive influence whilst the all too intimate community sometimes appearing as either a protective cocoon or limiting shell. Intimacy and distance is also seen in terms of each individual's relationship to Ireland and the Irish. Furthermore, in these second and third generation interviews, we have considered the distance that my contributors have found themselves from the Irishness they were brought up with - be that as a result of a voluntary estrangement or a less engineered movement away over time. For Bernard and Carolyn this was a feeling that

the Irish world within which they were nurtured was too restrictive, too judgmental, and just too small. A feeling that there must be more out there. A number have tried later in life to reconnect with their Irish roots, some more successfully than others.

Tim has found that through music and continued association with second-generation friends both old and new, that he has somehow reconnected with his Irishness. As his mother gets older, she appears more inclined to open up about her experiences and importantly her feelings relating to Ireland, her relocation to the UK, and her life here. Bernard found that he could ignore the religious aspects of his upbringing and return to his Irish roots, perhaps through starting a new family with a strong second-generation Irish woman who was always close to her family and close to her roots. His fondness, affinity, and affiliation with Ireland has been found through reconnecting with his old school friends, more often than not from a similar background, but also in returning to Ireland and finding that he genuinely loves it. Now visiting two or three times a year he has reawakened his spiritual link if not the religious link and, as an example of a second generation, post-national, post-Catholic British man with Irish roots he perhaps embodies a growing positionality for many children of the original 1950s and 60s diaspora.

Reconnecting has not always run as smoothly however as Carolyn explains:

Carolyn: I went through a period of desperately sort of wanting to find that Irishness again, because I had moved so far away from it... I realised I had moved apart from my Mum and Dad, I had no Irish friends, no real Irish connections. I had moved very far away from it and I remember wanting to... sort of reconnect with that and it being quite difficult to do so really and starting to listen to, try and find out a bit more about the traditional Irish music scene, even started thinking about... 'oh I'll go back to doing adult Irish dancing sessions'... I went to do Irish language classes, yeah, and just tried to reconnect, but it was just wasn't out there... you know, in a way that I felt I could access it, you know. I tried everything and I gave everything up. I didn't stick with it... I think that's because I had lost, that maybe, I was searching for this, this, sense of Irishness that I don't think is there any more, maybe, because it is all quite diluted now isn't it, you know, I suppose everything has become

quite eclectic and multicultural I feel, so you don't now have to be one thing or another, you know.

This echoes Gerry's comments on the more European outlook of the Irish in Ireland and his feeling that they are "quite happy to forget about the past". But of course this is about how you are perceived and not, crucially, how you perceive yourself. I asked Carolyn what she thought had changed whether it was the sense of Irishness that she now encountered when returning to learn the language or pick up Irish dancing again or if it was more a personal evolution.

Carolyn: I think 'cos I feel that I had a very good childhood... I wonder if it is to do with memory and that wanting, searching for that, that comforting feeling again, or being within your comfort zone and just being able to speak to people that had shared experiences and just knew what you were talking about and just the expressions and just the shared experience...

BOS: And did you not find then, or, that those, that there were anyone taking those classes and things that you tried to be connected, were in a similar position to you?

Carolyn: They were almost too Irish and with that was a bit of conservatism or traditionalism or often sort of associated with religion as well... I suppose, I have come back to this with all these other experiences as well that made me realise that I couldn't just go back to being the Irishness (*sic*). I wanted that, a bit, as a part of my life, but I didn't want it to be my life, you know. I remember taking J [her daughter] to the Irish dancing classes and straight away we didn't fit in<sup>82</sup>. You know what I'm saying and straight away at that age anyway, [she] looked different and it just didn't feel comfortable for her or me, erm, and I realised I was much more than that now and that seemed quite too narrow. I had gone beyond, beyond that, and that's what I found sometimes going to these Irish things is that still they seem too small if you like, and maybe I have outgrown it but a part of me still wants it.

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<sup>82</sup> Carolyn's partner is from the Middle East.

The allusion to a narrow colour based racism within the Irish community is of note here especially as a potential barrier to her daughter's entry a community to which Carolyn herself was clearly entitled. We explored further this overarching sense of narrowness and limitation as she tried to re-engage with a sense of her Irish self.

Carolyn: I found when I was trying to... reconnect and stuff it was quite hard to find anything, apart from the Irish language class that was... sort of, intellectually Irish, do you know what I'm saying? That whilst you could go to Dublin or you could go away or whatever and you could do all sorts of courses on different poets or Irish literature or history and everything like that, here it was all this, how would I say, sort of, it sounds derogatory, but I don't... low level Irishness, that type of Irishness was about the bacon you ate, the bread you ate, the music you listened to, it was all on that day-to-day stuff, level, which I think is all back to what we were saying about wanting to feel something, you know, memories and ... er ... it was quite hard to find anybody you could sort of intellectualize it with.

This sentiment was unique in terms of my conversations. The desire to find people with similar backgrounds that allows you, as Carolyn said, 'to speak to people that had shared experiences and just knew what you were talking about' was and remains important, but, to Carolyn at least, of more importance was the ability not simply to perform Irishness but to understand Irishness. Though to an extent, I could conclude that all of my contributors had agreed to take part in order to think about Irishness not just simply reflect or reject it. To find people with whom you could 'intellectualise' your position not just demonstrate it. That said, when the 'everyday' was brought into question Carolyn also felt quite protective towards it.

Carolyn: We had a visitor over from Dublin and she was a very, sort of, intelligent academic woman and she commented on that because she came to look at the Irish Festival and she said 'Oh my goodness, here they're more Irish than the Irish' and she was like quite condescending about it all, because it... all picked up on the small things of being Irish, how she perceived, I suppose, to all the great literary sort of stuff... That's to do with the generation that came here though wasn't it? I mean, I don't know about your parents but my parents left school at 14,16, barely able to, barely literate, you know and

they just worked for their living but wanted better things for their children, you know...

Alongside this desire to intellectualise notions of Irishness, there is still perhaps a sense of longing in Carolyn's desire to reconnect. Returning to dance classes, listening to music and even engaging in Irish language classes perhaps provided a link to and a tangible exchange with traditionally performed aspects of Irish culture but without the essential emotional entanglement of her parents and the community within which she was raised. This is perhaps the limits of pure nostalgia, which despite the interconnectedness of past and present, cannot fully or precisely recreate the emotional conditions of the past as we remember it. It can merely view it through an increasingly acculturated current lens, informed by our ever-lengthening pasts and our ever-unfolding presents.

Towards the end of our discussion I returned with Bernard to the question of his identity and he stumbled unwittingly towards the very question I had been exploring throughout this thesis:

Bernard: I've been trying to think to myself what is my Irish identity... I remember thinking of the line about Irish, about Morrissey saying it [Irish Blood, English Heart] and we've had the discussions about it, I do think I'm in a bit of a limbo, I wouldn't associate myself with English, I wouldn't associate with Irish, but I don't call myself... there's not something in between...

Whilst this leaves Bernard still searching for a name, for others this is beginning to resolve. Earlier in our conversation, Julia's initial reaction to being asked whether she would describe herself as Irish or English had resulted in her saying,

Julia: I think that there was a period when that was kind of, you know, discovering this identity; going through, discovering this identity, but at the other end I have come out thinking, well, I have my own voice as a second-generation Irish voice and not putting on an Irish accent and feeling a plastic... It's taken me a long time, I think, to actually think about my identity enough and actually writing my novel and the

reception of my novel, it's like I've found a kind of identity, a kind of a home... and I think through my writing, and I don't know if any other creative people, well of second-generation, would find that, I think I have found this, erm, you know, I am second generation Irish now and I have a space and there is a world that is second generation Irish.

Through this study, I initially set out to consider if there was some sense of a post-emigration, diasporic identity which lives on in legacy and which may influence the creativity, outlook and outputs of subsequent generations. Julia's conclusion that there is "a space and there is a world that is second-generation Irish", is a clear point of arrival and suggests an end to the seemingly infinite Irish narrative of departure. Additionally, and in response to Ryan's (1990) assertion that in Britain, Irish assimilation "was practically complete in a single generation" (p. 60), it suggests that a richer and more complex evolution was taking place. The old binary categories which created points of tension and separation all begin to fall away once we see that there can be a place which is neither England nor Ireland, but materially could be either, and in which we are neither English nor Irish. We are ourselves alone, yet with a common framework and network which helps us to understand various iterations of Irishness and which should unite rather than divide the diasporic generations. Bauman (1999) proposed that ethnicity is not "an identity given by nature but an identification created through social action... [and] any attempt to capture conclusively an ethnic identity will serve merely to provide a snapshot of the very recent past" (p. 21). Add to this the complexity of such identification and ethnic positioning constantly in the process of being over written and renewed, then we will see, as we have begun to through this chapter, identity and ethnic identification constantly change. Like the light from a star, we can only see that past luminance in our present and in that sense, it is only in our future will we truly understand ourselves.

We earlier considered Higgins (2016) suggestion that,

The Irishness that I believe is now emerging, but the possibilities of which have not yet been fully realised, is one that

will be informed by the experience of the Irish abroad as much, or even to a greater extent, than it will be informed by those of us who live in Ireland (p. 98).

Though he may have been speaking of first generation migrants past and present, I also interpret this as a recognition of a new Hibernian with a recognition and understanding of the cultural and political history that has shaped the world, their place in it and impact upon it. This new Irishness however, may have little to say about Ireland as we understand it to be today or as it has been presented and represented to us over the years. As a stop on the journey, it will again provide a snapshot of the recent past but a past that may be moving beyond an exclusionist nationalist discourse.

The twelfth century scholar Hugo of St Victor, (in Said, *Orientalism* 2003) projected,

The man who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is as a foreign land. The tender soul has fixed his love on one spot in the world; the strong man has extended his love to all places; the perfect man has extinguished his.<sup>83</sup> (p. 259)

At the time of writing, an optimistic post-nationalist might position us somewhere between the strong man and the perfect man, but newly re-emerging reactionary pro-nationalist and fundamentalist discourses might take us back to a more violent past without the strength and tenderness required for a peaceful and sustainable future.

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<sup>83</sup> See *The Didascalicon of Hugh Saint Victor*.

## Chapter 5

### Terry Christian

#### **“Who the f\*\*\* does Terry Christian think he is?”**

(Christian, 2007, p. 9)

The previous chapter investigated the domestic context of the second- and third-generation Irish growing up in Manchester during the 1960s, 70s and 80s and the performance spaces within which their identities were rehearsed and performed. Central to the retelling of these diasporic narratives was memory and post-memory and the impact of both on the environments in which they were raised and their recollections of those times. Lives underpinned by post memory and then considered in the interview fora of the last chapter therefore, place us at the centre of the creative possibilities of remembering the past. The actual re-narrativisation of their pasts as part of the interview process, presents opportunities for remembering and re-remembering not just incidents but feelings and emotions. We have previously discussed the changing, acculturating lens through which we view the past and how this impacts on the living archive and further its inability to precisely recreate the past. It is therefore crucial to bear in mind not only the unreliability of memory as reflected in these personal oral histories, as true and immutable reference points, but also, in the case of the next two case studies, that subsequent conscious performances of that memory may be further compromised or indeed enhanced. Collins and Caulfield (2014) suggest,

Ireland, whose past has infamously been aligned with an imagined or, as Declan Kiberd suggests, ‘invented’ history, has seen the burden and the benefit of a theatrical and performance tradition which has helped to create this past whether it be cultural, literary or political... lines between fact, fiction, memory, and history are effectively blurred into the historical imagination. Resulting then is an infinite conversation between history, memory and the imagined. The creative possibilities in remembering the past remind us that it is not just a linear narrative, but a living and regenerative discourse. (p. 5)



Through a consideration of Paul Ricoeur, Collins and Cauldfield (2014) interestingly present this blurring of fact, fiction, memory and history, drawing again on a performance based narrative: “The interweaving of history and fiction in the reconfiguration of time rests, in the final analysis, upon this reciprocal overlapping, the quasi-historical moment of fiction [the performance] changing places with the quasi-fictive moment of history [the archive]” (p. 6). As an image, Collins and Caulfield suggested a Möbius Strip linking past to the present. We can visualise this structure infinitely weaving in and out of itself, one surface, one duration, and in substance containing the past and the present concurrently. The past and the present are inseparable one becoming the other *ad infinitum*. In performance and identity terms, this suggests a blending or joining of the archive and the performance, and of history and memory. As all things, and especially all performances are contingent, in as much as they have or will have an audience, and all audiences are contingent, we should recognise the complexity of the constructed performance of identity that we are now moving on to consider. Schechner (2003) suggests,

... stand-up comics play aspects of themselves. Disclosure is at the heart of the comic’s art... the audience teeters between knowing that it is being put upon and glimpsing brief, but deep, looks into the ‘real person’. Like a Malibu beach muscleman the comic overdevelops part of his/her personality and displays these shamelessly. (pp. 44–45)

We will consider over the course of the next two chapters if, how and to what extent two writers and performers such as Steve Coogan and Terry Christian reveal themselves through their work and how far their work is the tangible revelation of their embodied diasporic narratives and perspectives. In doing so, I will be responding directly to Atkinson’s concerns with overviews provided by Schiefflin and Goffman regarding the application of a performance studies approach that admits that performance is inherent in human interaction and in reality construction, but may also produce an unintended ‘blind-spot’. Atkinson suggests, “The only limitation with such accounts is that they treat performance as so pervasive in cultural affairs that there remains little to say specifically about the performing arts or the extra-ordinary performances of art, music, opera and so on” (Atkinson, 2004. p. 109). Following on from the

previous chapter which sought out the performance and performative aspects of everyday life, the following two chapters provide a re-balanced approach that gives equal attention to the performativity inherent in human conduct and the extra-ordinary performance of Terry Christian and Steve Coogan. Both the everyday and the “extra-daily”<sup>84</sup> (to quote Theatre Anthropologist Nicola Savarese) are imbued with the quality of revealing truth about interaction and the reciprocal impacts on the ‘audience’ and the ‘performer’. Immediate traces of the past and shadows of personal and cultural history, may be more apparent in Christian’s work than in a surface reading of Coogan’s output, but through both we will evidence that their ‘performance’, as the act of embodied memory, contains all that they are, if not all that they may yet become. We move beyond action to the motivation for the action; we move beyond the word to understand the motivation for the word and in so doing seek to reveal more of the ‘real person’ through hearing the whispering legacy of their diasporic experience.

Framed within Christian’s live stand-up show, *Naked Confessions of a Recovering Catholic*<sup>85</sup>, and drawing on two autobiographical publications, *Reds in The Hood* (Christian, 1999) and *My Word* (Christian, 2007), a number of newspaper articles and online sources and two unrecorded conversations between myself and Terry Christian, this chapter considers the *mise-en-scène* of Christian’s early personal and professional life leading to the consciously and conspicuously constructed performance of Irishness which underpins, and in fact ‘is’, *Naked Confessions of a Recovering Catholic*. This show moulds his ethnicity into a recognisable narrative, clearly uses his background as autoethnographic source material for a live show that captures, sometimes in visceral detail, the tensions of growing up as part of Manchester’s Irish diaspora and to an extent ‘performs’ the thesis. It also neatly juxtaposes, indeed interweaves the everyday and the ‘extra-daily’ in an accessible format

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<sup>84</sup> See Barba, E. and Savares, N. A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer. Routledge. NYC. 1991 (p. 10)

<sup>85</sup> I will draw on two performances of Christian’s live show: i) Band on the Wall Manchester 10.01.14 (Christian 2014a) and ii) Buxton Fringe Festival 26.07.14 (Christian 2014b).

to a knowing diasporic audience. If not quite reflecting Victor St Hugo's vision of the perfect man, Christian certainly appears to have lived his life in a series of 'foreign lands' and through the deliberate re-telling of his life in his books, Christian revealed his continuing sense of un-belonging. Following the previous chapter which considered the more accidental, unintentional and quotidian performances of and performance venues for Irishness, we will view the legacy of experience and memory on Christian's constructed performances considering briefly his early childhood, family background, schooling, exposure to religion and his broadcasting career. His stage show additionally presents us with an opportunity to consider the performer as the embodied site of identity and performance, the performances as text, the material as text and the relationship of all of these with an audience.

The stage of Manchester's Band On The Wall venue is sparsely dressed. A lone microphone stand bisects the stage and is angled towards a projector screen in the centre of the curtained backdrop. The screen displays a still image of Terry Christian, possibly kneeling, (the lower portion of the scene is not visible) with hands clasped in prayer and with Rosary beads flowing through his fingers. He is positioned in front of a plinth on which rests a photograph of Eric Cantona, recognisable with his football shirt collar standing up, looking out over his left shoulder to the audience. To the left of this plinth, stage right, there is a taller plinth upon which rests a small figure of the Virgin Mary of the type usually filled with holy water and, next to this, a larger statue of the Child of Prague with its head still affixed its body.<sup>86</sup> Christian looks up in innocent supplication to the benign and all loving Franco-Mancunian deity - Eric Cantona, whilst both the Child of Prague and the Virgin Mary keep a watchful eye on Christian. The image is framed by a thick white line either side, faintly suggesting a polaroid capture from a bygone time of this moment of peaceful, reflective union. Music breaks the silent reverence of the stage: *Laudate Deum, Introitus*<sup>87</sup>. The male voices, singing in perfect unison, weave

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<sup>86</sup> Later in Christian's performance a common Irish superstition is discussed that if the head comes off a Child of Prague of its own accord it may be taken as a sign of good luck!

<sup>87</sup> Performed by Alberto Turco, Nova Schola Gregoriana, released 28<sup>th</sup> June 1993 Naxos.

their 14<sup>th</sup> Century Gregorian chant through the empty spaces of the theatre. Dressed recognisably in the cassock of a high-ranking church official, Terry Christian enters the stage and proceeds to throw water onto the audience from his water bottle as though blessing them during a religious ceremony. Having doused the front four or five rows liberally with water he then takes a drink from the bottle before placing it on a side table [altar]. He bows in mock veneration and servile appreciation, and takes his place behind the microphone, centre stage. “The Lord be with you” intones Christian in a deep and rich authoritative, obviously Irish, accent. (Christian, 2014a). From the very first words spoken it is clear that there is little separation in Christian’s mind, or most certainly his performance, between being Irish and being Catholic; his lived experience, as revealed in his performance, reflecting both.

Born in a working-class district of Manchester, and as his web site terrychristian.tv suggests, “by being more or less unemployed at the right time” (Christian, 2013. para 3), Terry Christian became a recognisable face and particularly voice on our airways and screens during the late 1980s and 1990s. Following a stalled engagement with Higher Education at Thames Polytechnic in the late 1970s, he was picked to appear on Granada TV’s 1981 topical debate show *Devil’s Advocate*, a series commissioned in the wake of the Scarman Report<sup>88</sup> into the Brixton and Toxteth riots which spread to Moss side in Manchester against a prevailing backdrop of high unemployment. As a result of his confidently expressed views on this programme he was given his own show on BBC Radio Derby called *Barbed Wireless*<sup>89</sup>. The show went on to win two Sony awards. In 1988 he joined Key 103 and in 1999 began writing a column called *The Word* for the Manchester Evening News. He and his column title were soon to relocate to London to host the ‘dangerous’ and controversial Channel 4 music show *The Word*.<sup>90</sup> A period of relative quiet

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<sup>88</sup> Published November 25<sup>th</sup> 1981.

<sup>89</sup> *Barbed Wireless*, music and chat show which ran for six years from 1981 at Radio Derby.

<sup>90</sup> In the Q&A session following the Band on the Wall performance he was asked by an audience member about his involvement in *The Word* and whether it is possible to consider TV as ‘dangerous’. Christian’s response was as ever forthright. “We once got described... as the most dangerous music show ever. It was actually described as the most dangerous music show on television ever. Whoever wrote that had obviously never seen that episode

followed through the 1990s though he was still in demand on radio, TV and maintained his writing. The last half decade has seen him increase his television work and he has taken part in *Celebrity Big Brother* (2009) finishing second, “always the bridesmaid never the bride” (Christian 2014b), host a topical discussion show for ITV *It’s My Life*, has appeared on *8 out of 10 Cats*, *Would I Lie To You* and *Come Dine With Me* and is a regular contributor to Matthew Wright’s *The Wright Stuff*. Throughout he has continued to write for various newspapers and published three books.<sup>91</sup> This might seem impressive for someone who described himself as having “worked hard and applied myself, yet never had any positive outcome career-wise or life-wise from this quiet determination. All my good fortune has just wafted down from above” (Christian, 2013b. para 1). Reed-Danahay (2005) captured an unlikely parallel in her consideration of a 2002 interview between Yvette Delsaut and Pierre Bourdieu, in which Delsaut observes,

Bourdieu described most of the ‘choices’ in his career in terms of a mixture of chance and habitus. He rarely spoke of himself in terms of an active social agent who doggedly pursued his aims or got involved in political manoeuvrings in order to achieve them. (p. 35)

Bourdieu responds,

I don’t have to tell you that many things that have played a determining part in my ‘intellectual path’ happened by chance. My own contribution, doubtless linked to my habitus, consisted essentially in making the most of them, to the best of my abilities (I think for example that I seized on a great number of opportunities that many people would have let go by). (p. 35)

The basis of Christian’s stage act and indeed his act of ‘being,’ is simply his lived experience, his habitus, and its influence on his evolving sense of self. It is always possible that both Christian and Bourdieu are under playing

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of Top of the Pops with Jimmy Saville, Jonathon King, and... [third name drowned in audience laughter]”. (Christian 2014a)

<sup>91</sup> The third book being a biography of the Gallagher Brothers written with their older brother Paul. *Brothers from Childhood to Oasis*, Virgin Books, 1996.

themselves and their ability to identify and grasp opportunity wherever and whenever it presents itself and perhaps this final extract from *Locating Bourdieu*, is close to the truth for many:

I think I could create two intellectual biographies for myself that were completely different – one which made all my successive choices appear to be the product of a project directed in a methodical way since the beginning; the other also completely accurate, that described a chain of chance, of more or less fortuitous encounters, happy or unhappy. (Reed-Danahay, 2005. p. 22)

In each scenario, Bourdieu is asserting that he can retrospectively rationalise both paths as an equally acceptable route to where he is now. What is not clear from this is whether he believes there is any divine intervention in either of these routes and whilst his alleged agnosticism might present us with an answer to that, certainly Christian advances in his stage performance the prospect of God being responsible for both the luck he has had and the problems he has encountered. Constant contradictions, conflicts and social binaries are presented in a typically forthright manner eschewing essentialist notions of religious and class-based superiority. Through his two autobiographical publications and his intermittently touring stand-up show *Naked Confessions of a Recovering Catholic* Christian engages with his life through these almost therapeutic or perhaps anti-therapeutic, narratives, purging himself of his anger and confessing his sins of anti-authoritarianism whilst legitimising, or at least offering an explanation for both through blame displacement. Throughout his stand-up show he returns to the theme of responsibility and the premise that he is not responsible for his actions; God is.

These therapeutic/anti-therapeutic narratives emerge in the sense that he engages with an audience, live or as readership, in a dialogue stimulated by 'real' events, seeking understanding, though he does not appear to be seeking an understanding of self by 'self' *per se* - he thinks he has that, but rather an understanding from others. Conversely, he sees that the Church, his Irish upbringing and his social status have all contributed to his becoming what he

perceives that he is. What he actually is, or is in the process of becoming, cannot ever be ultimately resolved in the present. This conclusion accepts that all identities are in flux, porous and susceptible to external influence and internal negotiation. Christian's live stage performance, though describing a recognisable Irish, Catholic, working-class background is less of a questioning of his motivations than a defence of his thesis using his most up to date research - this is not then so much a 'confession' as a justification. His performance rarely, if ever, consciously separates Catholicism from Irishness, with each recollection presented in an Irish accent. From his father, to his teachers, the priests he came into contact with and the parents of his school friends, each anecdote is delivered with a recognisable and practised Irish inflection. He is therefore not just a recovering Catholic but a recovering Irish Catholic.

Following his entry on to the stage as earlier described, his performance continues.

Now my name is Father Malachy Mary O'Rourke and I am the senior Monsignor of Punishment at the Seminary of the Extreme Crucifixion [*quiet laughter from audience*] and I'm here to warn you that in the next hour you're going to be hearing a lot of nonsense about how the Catholic Church is full of narrow-minded, sadistic humourless paedophiles [*more audience laughter*] – and it's not true... We do have a sense of humour [*louder laughs*] and just to prove it, here's a little joke:

How many Protestants does it take to change a light bulb?

Why bother they live in eternal darkness! [*big Laughter*].  
(Christian, 2014a)

Thus, we start the show with an irrefutable connection between Irishness and Catholicism in terms of Christian's lived experience, and one which we can assume is no doubt familiar to many of the audience, especially given how few own up to being English when he asks later in the show. He taps into the current crisis facing the Church in terms of its handling of wide spread accusations of child abuses, by association the Church's involvement with the

Reformatory Schools currently under investigation in Ireland, and the scandal of the Magdalene Laundries. Interestingly the joke he opens with is 'borrowed', as far as I can establish, from an early Caroline Aherne character called Sister Mary Immaculate (mid 1990s). The 'how many 'x' does it take to change a light bulb' formula is decades old and Caroline added to this well-known joke format, restaging the joke dressed as a nun clasping a bible as part of a live act that took a wry sideways glance at the views and idiosyncrasies of the Catholic Church. The parallels I suggest are not accidental as Christian and Aherne were well known to each other prior to her death in 2016<sup>92</sup>.

Christian (1999) recalls,

Mass every Sunday lasted an hour and involved getting dressed up in something very itchy. The Rosary every night in October with its joyful, sorrowful and mysterious mysteries; church on All Souls' Day to pray for the dead; and the rites of passage like confession, communion and confirmation and wearing rotting shamrock which would be sent in the post from our relatives in Ireland every St Patrick's Day. (p. 42)

These liminal catholic ceremonies and ritualistic performances whilst naturally serving to bring people, families, children together, clearly separated us from our protestant, English neighbours. From a young age therefore we were all clearly different, clearly marked. Christian's (1999) description of his church and the congregation immediately evokes the 1970s for the reader in its smell "of Brylcreem, cheap perfume and incense" (p.73) and his performance recalls some of the darker episodes:

...when we went to Mass to practise our confession. I was kind of nervous and I used to have this horrible habit – well I've still got it - of going...*[whistles tunelessly]* whistling tunelessly under me breath. No career in that one *[Laughter]*. Sister Bernadette

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<sup>92</sup> Caroline Aherne was a contemporary of Christian, known to him through media networks but they also grew up only a few miles apart, Christian in Old Trafford and Aherne in Wythenshawe. Christian was keen that Channel 4 screen test Aherne for a presenter's role on *The Word* whilst he was hosting the show but this never happened. Aherne sadly died in 2016 following a recurrent cancer.



slapped me in the mouth and said (in an Irish accent) 'if you whistle in church it makes the Virgin Mary's lips bleed'. [*Loud laughter*]. If you think, If you think you're scared of going to hell over a Milky Way (referring to an early story about stealing a Milky Way chocolate bar from the corner shop) wait 'til you get told you've made God's Mum's lips bleed. (Christian, 2014a)

Further eccentricities of the faithful are explored both through his books and his stand-up material and in a lengthy section of his act he discusses a number of saints and their relative merits and accomplishments. Putting an image of the Child of Prague onto the projector screen, Christian continues,

Nearly everyone had one of these in their house and if its head came off on its own it was good luck". [*Audience laughter*]. And the superstition is in Ireland, if it's raining on the morning of your wedding day you take the 'Choild o' Prayg', [pronounced in his family's Dublin accent] and you put him in your garden. Or alternatively you can stick him in your hedge, and it makes it sunny in the afternoon" [*audience laughter*]. Even then I was thinking if he'd wanted to do a miracle that was useful he could have stopped our Sheila from marrying that fuckin' nob 'ead from Gorton. [*loud audience laughter*] and he was a city fan..." (Christian, 2014a)

And yet in his consideration of religion Christian (1999) alights on an interesting angle on his own fragile sense of belonging. "In a sense we all were [devout Catholics]: insofar as religion was the way we'd been taught of getting the world to make some sense and our lives sometimes resembled waiting rooms for a place we never quite reached" (p. 257). There is a Beckettian bleakness to this which perhaps appears to situate his sense of self in a version of Turner's 'betwixt and between' liminal space.<sup>93</sup> That said, his act and the books upon which it is based would suggest not so much existing in a state of perpetual limbo *between* two different worlds, but having to inhabit different worlds at different times.

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<sup>93</sup> See 'Betwixt and Between: Patterns of Masculine and Feminine Initiation'. Open Court Publishing, 1987 (editors Louise Carus Mahdi, Steven Foster, Meredith Little).

Christian's website provides an introduction to himself and to his then touring show,

I was born and grew up one of six kids to Irish parents in what was then a slum, half a mile south of Manchester City Centre in the Brooks Bar neighbourhood of Old Trafford adjacent to Hulme and Moss Side. An outside loo, no phone, no fridge, free school dinners with my Dad's wage as a labourer our family's only income. In that area, almost everyone was either Irish descent or West Indian. That shared poverty with its rivalries on the streets was how we lived until I was 14, and though I've had more years living in privileged comfort, it's like those years defined me as the person I am. The question I constantly ask myself is why? And there's no doubt in my mind that a lot has to do with the peculiarity of my Irish Catholic upbringing". (Christian, 2013b. para 4).

Reflecting Christian's conclusions, Bhabha's (2004) influential *The location of culture*, encourages us to consider further "how fully the shadow of the nation falls on the condition of exile" (p. 202). The immediate and disempowering context experienced by first generation migrants might have prevented many from analysing the causes and effects of emigration too closely but what of the second and subsequent generations, growing up in an ideologically fragmented environment? Shrouded in a fog of 'post-memory' that punctuates their emerging sense of self and which constantly informs and undermines their fragile narratives of belonging/unbelonging? Can they come to a clearer understanding of the legacies of nation and exile on identity?

Christian (1999) offers us a view on his own home environment and those of his friends growing up in Old Trafford in the 1970s:

Our parents invariably came from poor Irish stock, and though proud of this, they were afflicted with the strange 'fatality' of being Irish... A sort of guilt also lingered in this generation of Irish that had emigrated. Their great grandparents had survived the holocaust of the great famines between 1845 and 1849. That period brought Gaelic culture and language to its knees before English oppression... All our great grandparents had left our parents was the purity of their religion and virtue, and memories of their hardship. And our parents had fled the difficulties of their homeland with hardly a word of its language

on their tongues. So, in spite of the fact that the Irish had never invaded, conquered and enslaved other nations or committed atrocities against other cultures on their sovereign soil, a kind of shame attached itself to the Irishness of our parents. (p. 9)

This shame might in part account for the assimilationist approach that Christian's mother took, why she professed not to "like the Irish very much" (Christian, 2014a), and from this the position offered at home became, "the less Irish, the better your luck, so our parents did their best not to thrust our Irishness up on us" (Christian, 1999, p. 11). These motifs also perhaps present an explanation for Tim's mother's view of Ireland and her assimilationist motivations discussed in Chapter 4. Additionally, and perhaps more tellingly, Christian's maternal Grandfather had fought for the British Army in India and, as he recounts, "Branded a West-Briton by the Irish, because of his service in the British army, he moved his whole family over to Hulme in Manchester" (Christian, 2007, p. 10). A body of work is beginning to emerge around the treatment of these forgotten Irish, written out of history, who signed up and fought for the British Army throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century at the same time that Ireland itself was engaged in on going political, and at times armed, struggle against the British e.g. (Doherty 1999, Gregory & Paseta (eds) 2002, Girvin 2007, Wills 2007, Kelly 2012, O'Connor 2014). Socialist political leanings, economically driven enlistment, a *quid pro quo* relating to Home Rule, family tradition or simply adventure might account for the motivations of some of those that joined up, nevertheless, the continuing troubled relationship between the two neighbouring countries has led to a noticeable silence around those who took the King's shilling, and their treatment on their return to Ireland. As a result of his experiences back in Ireland, Christian's grandfather moved the family to England taking with them their four-year old daughter (Christian's mother) and her seven siblings. For this reason she didn't actually have an Irish accent, though from Christian's reflections one might assume that she would have happily gone unrecognised as Irish at all.

His father on the other hand, he describes as a stereotypical Dubliner who was brought up in the in a one bedroomed tenement flat in the Liberties, a poor and under resourced working class area of Dublin:

My father was an expert at living for the day and having a rigid routine. He ate to the clock. If it was twelve-thirty that meant lunch and five o'clock meant dinnertime. He went to the bookies twice a week and out drinking every weekend and Sunday lunchtimes after his weekly visit to Mass. In this routine he found contentment and shelter from what was a hard life. (Christian, 1999, pp. 7–8)

This routine is a recognisable trope in Irish working class homes, the rigidity of the meal time being comically memorable for me and remains a feature of my Father's regime to this day, though it is arguably more an observation of working-class mores than an Irish characteristic:

Me Dad was a Dubliner and he was a stereotypical Dubliner, and his only expressions of his Irishness was drinking Guinness, betting on horses with Irish names... and supporting anyone at any sport whatsoever against England. [then in an Irish accent] 'Come on Eye-raq. Come on Eye-ran, Afghanistan – Satan's eleven you're doing great'. In fact, my Dad, to be honest with you, hated the English... (Christian, 1999, pp. 7–8)

Christian therefore found himself surrounded by Irish people in his Irish/Caribbean neighbourhood, at school and at church and importantly, despite his parents attempts to play down their Irish heritage, at home and through his extended family. Yet, he experienced conflicting views on both Englishness and Irishness, and the English and the Irish, within this environment. England in the 1950s and 60s as we have heard, was still seen as the land of the oppressor and Christian observes,

Our Parents came from an Ireland that was still mentally an English colony and like the Sioux Indians, their race memories of the colonizing power meant they'd never really trust the ruling classes of their conquerors and retain a healthy suspicion about their motives. In their stories and the often corny old Irish rebel songs they'd listen to was the age-old maxim, 'the struggle between people and power, is the struggle between memory and forgetting', the Irish, thankfully, have longer memories than most. (Christian, 2013, para 17).

This lack of trust coupled with a debilitating or certainly limiting memory of victimhood and oppression is to be found in Mary McAleese's 2010 address

at St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin:<sup>94</sup>

So often the past was an arsenal to be ransacked for weapons to confirm our sense of victimhood and to identify the enemy. The wounds of both ancient and recent history are still raw; the scars of emigration, discrimination and poverty, the low self-esteem caused by centuries of colonization...these we can still touch and feel. But our relationship with the past has been problematic, and the core problem is how we have remembered it. (McAleese, 2010. Para 12)

In conversation with Christian it was clear that he has immersed himself in Irish history and, understanding that memory is different from history, he has drawn on both history, and living memory, including 'post memory' to inform his current positionality. Although with regard to these corny old Irish rebel songs, Christian only had limited exposure, as he says at home, "you'd get about 30 seconds of 'In Mountjoy Jail one Monday morning'<sup>95</sup>, before we'd be shouting at him [his father] to "turn that bloody rubbish off"<sup>96</sup>. This recording features in Christian's act as we shall later see.

If Christian's father's only expression of Irishness was to be found in drinking Guinness and betting on horses, then in most narratives of 'Irishness', both first and second generation, drink is a common factor and the pub/club a clearly recognisable 'diasporic space'. As part of the heroic narrative attached to the Irish Navvy<sup>97</sup> drinking plays a large part in these stories of strength, endurance, resilience and heroism, violence and death, and particularly again for those single men 'on tramp', or 'on the lump'.<sup>98</sup> The heroic Irish, the resilient Irish, the fighting Irish, were all characters and characteristics we were

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<sup>94</sup> 'Hopes for a New Millenium' Address. St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, 11 June 2000

<sup>95</sup> 'In Mountjoy Jail...', the opening words to the popular Irish rebel song 'Kevin Barry' - unattributed but written shortly after Barry was hung November 1<sup>st</sup> 1920. Also appears as the first track on side A of Christian's father's favourite LP *Irish Rebel Songs* (Hallmark, 1967).

<sup>96</sup> "Gospel According to Terry". Irish News Online. Published 03.01.2014 (retrieved 27.06.14).

<sup>97</sup> See Tony Murray, *London Irish Fictions, Narrative, Diaspora and Identity*, Liverpool University press (2012).

<sup>98</sup> Various described as a fairly nomadic life, being paid cash in hand on a day to day basis for work performed, with no cards, no national insurance, no holidays or sick pay, no pension or unemployment benefits - see for example, Ultan Cowley, *The Men Who built Britain* (2001), Tony Murray, *London Irish Fictions* (2014), and 'Jack from Connemara' in the popular 1980s song *Take me Back to Castlebar*.

brought up with which described aspects of ourselves, our families and friends and our history more generally and which were repeated in stories told and retold at home throughout our childhood years. There was strength and communion in those stories which were at once familiar through their retelling yet strange in their narrative of generations past.

Having tossed his Monsignor's cassock to the floor, Christian re-opens his Band on the Wall show as himself,

I have to tell you every time I play in Manchester I'm nervous and I've just come back from Belfast doing this stuff. Try asking 300 people in Belfast 'er... hands up if you're Catholic'. Especially if you have an accent like ours – you have an accent like someone who kicked in their grandma's door at 3am, back in 1982. (Christian, 2014a)

Indeed, to compound this sense of difference and separation, and perhaps provide evidence to support the “little Irelanders”<sup>99</sup> view that only those born in Ireland could claim to be ‘Irish’, Christian's maternal grandma had a particularly view on authentic claims to Irishness. She had one further child who was born in Manchester, and so his mother's brother, the last of her seven children, ‘Uncle Bill’, in true ignominious Irish style “was referred to ever after by me Grandma as the ‘English Bastard’ [*loud audience laughter*]”. (Christian, 2014a). The laughter here is interesting as it serves not only to mark in the audience their recognition that they too might be considered ‘English Bastards’ but also to foreground how ridiculous the idea is of attempting to locate nationality, or more problematical ethnicity, based purely on an accidental geography. “Growing up in England” Christian says,

We all felt vaguely proud of being of Irish stock and then when we visited relatives in Dublin we ended up in fights because we were seen as English... It was just one of those things, the blood might be pure Irish the accent was pure English - which was enough for the local kids to try and give us a kicking. (Christian, 2013b. para 12).

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<sup>99</sup> Little Irelander is a term commonly used to describe an overtly nationalistic perspective see Heaney “bigoted, parochial ‘little Irelander’ stuff” (in Alcobia-Murphy, 2006, p. 240).

Here we are reminded of Walter's (in Ife 2008b) conclusions that the second-generation Irish are denied access to an Irish identity by both the Irish and the English as a result of their accents because the recognition of such a hybrid alignment would indicate an unacceptable dilution of essentialist models of Irish and English Identity. 'Feck off back t'Inglan yer bowsie<sup>100</sup> bastard' (Christian, 2007, p. 17), Christian remembers as a particularly memorable instruction when playing football out in the street with his Irish cousins in Dublin, which in its way encapsulates many of the tensions underpinning this thesis, and for Christian underpins his new direction as a stand-up comedian.

That Christian stood out as different to his Irish cousins is evident, we have however also suggested throughout this thesis, that the various generations of the diaspora are recognisable to each other and we see in Christian a discussion of the second generation also gravitating towards each other, however unconsciously. Spending some afternoons on the dole with Mark E. Smith of The Fall, Christian (1999) recalls a conversation in which Smith remarked that "nearly all The Fall band members were of Irish catholic origin – Mark (E. Smith) said it was accidental and that they were just the sort of people he got on with."<sup>101</sup> (p. 57). In principle, this is perhaps unsurprising, and reflects the auto-ethnographic introduction to this thesis which recounted my gravitation towards friends of Irish descent whilst at Huddersfield Polytechnic. Smith similarly alludes to a subconscious drift towards musicians with whom he feels some empathy or connection and who then just happen to be mainly of Irish Catholic origin. This is perhaps no accidental diasporic narrative, but more a self-constructing personal and social narrative, unavoidably chaotic yet almost synchronously predestined and apposite and resonates clearly with Campbell's (2011) observations on the band cultures of

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<sup>100</sup> A low class, mean or obstreperous person or a drunkard see ([www.collinsdictionary.com](http://www.collinsdictionary.com)).

<sup>101</sup> This comment is interesting for two reasons, firstly that there have been over 40 members of the band and for many to be of Irish Catholic stock would be remarkable in itself. Second, if popular myth is to be believed, Smith's lack of respect for the band members suggests tension rather than camaraderie. See <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2006/jan/05/popandrock>.

Oasis, Dexy's Midnight Runners, The Pogues and The Smiths. It also resonates clearly with a number of other similar observations including my own 1991 song *Second Generation* whose lyrics open this thesis, Morrissey's more recent song *Irish Blood English Heart* and John Lydon's thoughts on his annual visits to his mother's home in Cork.<sup>102</sup> "Vaguely proud" Christian might have felt of being of Irish stock, yet the prevailing narrative around Irishness in the Christian household was one of "fatalistic stoicism that said Irish and poor, Irish and emigrated, Irish and dead". (Christian, 2013b. para 5). As we have heard from others, this pride, deriving from the same roots of being poor, emigrated and dead, produced the narratives of strength, resilience and heroism that we were brought up with.

Exemplifying his father's notion of what heroic resilience might look like, Christian next puts on screen a picture of his father's favourite record, an 33RPM LP record sleeve from 1967, called *Irish Rebel Songs*<sup>103</sup>. The picture is of a man in 'peasant' clothing, open necked white, striped shirt, red neckerchief, black trousers with thick belt and large buckle, brown working jacket and a cap. Arms and mouth open wide possibly in song, as a call to arms, or in defiance – or more likely all three. The backdrop is a tricolour flag, fully unfurled against a plain green background. The typography used on the album cover is predominantly orange; this includes the title of the album and the list of the songs contained on the album<sup>104</sup>. The name of the band, 'The Freedom Fighters', is displayed in White against this green and orange assembly.

Me Dad, for his twistedness, this was his favourite album. *[Audience yeah, yeah yeahs and cheers also show recognition]*. Irish Rebel Songs. An hour of killing the Brits set to music! Like I said... it's not my fault – you should have

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<sup>102</sup> see (Lydon, Zimmerman, & Zimmerman, 2016).

<sup>103</sup> See ("The Freedom Fighters (2) - Irish Rebel Songs," n.d.). Allegro Label, Hallmark Records.

<sup>104</sup> The list of songs would be well known to those who have been brought up with this as 'easy listening' from childhood – Kevin Barry, *Boulavogue*, *Father Crowley*, *Black and Tan Gun*, *Roddy McCawley*, *Tipperary Far Away*, *The Merry Ploughboy*, *The Boys of Kilmichael*, *The Wearing of the Green* and *My only son was shot in Dublin*.



seen the faces in Belfast when that one went up. You should have seen my face... So Irish rebel songs... every single Irish family in Manchester had a copy of that in their house. What a welcome eh? That scared the rent man. I think they withdrew it from sale in 1972 just after bloody Sunday. 9s and 6d in Woolworths. (Christian, 2014a)

Has there ever been a more visually obvious nationalist narrative explored in Woolworths? This record and others like it were on display and sale in Woolworths alongside others artists who were perhaps the more acceptable face of Irishness in England at the time; Val Doonican (*Delaney's Donkey, Paddy McGinty's Goat*) for example, sitting alongside the decidedly more controversial The Wolfe Tones (*Come out ye Black and Tans, A Nation Once again*). But it was songs such as those by the Wolfe Tones and from the Irish Rebel Songs album, alongside popular chart hits, that provided the soundtracks to our youth, no doubt contributing to our awakening political sensibilities and informing our sense of right and wrong. Returning from Mass on Sunday morning and playing selections from my parent's record collection which included The Gallowglass Ceili band<sup>105</sup>, The Wolfe Tones or The Go Lucky Four<sup>106</sup> and listening to the Walton's music programme on Saturdays whilst eating our dinner, were ritualistic and formed part of the performance of our identities at that time. Choosing to perform these acts of allegiance in adult company as we, and certainly the M sisters described when their father and his friends returned from the pubs, allowed us to develop our repertoire and evidence our archive of 'Irishness'. Christian, to an extent echoing the M sisters' testimony, observes,

In alcohol, our elders were proud to be Irish, descendants of warrior-poets, saints and high kings; when sober they were glad they had left a country that had little to offer them only a legacy of shame that they could neither understand nor come to terms with. (Christian, 1999, p. 11)

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<sup>105</sup> The Gallowglass Ceili Band from Naas, County Kildare, Ireland was formed in 1950 by Pat McGarr. See <http://www.thegallowglassceiliband.com>.

<sup>106</sup> The Go Lucky Four were four teachers from Belfast. Sleeve notes indicate recognition came through their celebratory anti-English songs as *Limerick is Beautiful, Show me the Man, God Save Ireland, The West's Awake, The Bold Fenian Men*.

This may not accurately reflect everyone's experience. As a child for example, I recall none of the shame of which he speaks. The singing of rebel songs at the end of a night amongst family and friends being as common as their rendering after Mass on Sunday afternoons. From a very early age therefore, a shared sense of identity was being nurtured through spending an hour here and there "killing the Brits set to music".

Lyrically concluding a section on his childhood environment, *Reds in the Hood*, Christian (1999) describes further this sense of being an outsider whilst living in plain sight.

Everybody minded everybody else's business, the rows of terraces may as well have been made of glass, condemnation lingered in whispers and privacy was unheard of. So we hid our deepest thoughts from the world and stuck our chests out and pretended to one another that we were perfect. But we were children of immigrants and aware that to be Irish was to be second class". (p. 8).

In order to preserve dignity and pride whilst living under the glare and scrutiny of close neighbours, another mask was adopted but it was a mask that presumably everyone could penetrate as everyone on his street wore, and therefore understood, this same mask.

If memories of Ireland's struggle for independence and the subsequent civil war were points of contestation during Christian's formative years then school was to provide no clear respite, bringing into sharp relief his sense of competing binary identifications and loyalties. Of this he says,

... every day we inhabited two different worlds. One of alma mater, Latin and academia, and one on the estates of Moston, Moss side, Collyhurst, Ancoats, Hulme, Ardwick and Stretford. Looking back what we shared was the feeling of never fitting in" (Christian, 2007, pp. 23–24).

Having to wear your school uniform to and from school through areas of town which were not sympathetic to Irish Catholic sensibilities, or actually just not sympathetic to difference was an experience that both Terry Christian and I

shared, albeit in different parts of the UK. We noted earlier the lack of a bridge between the two cultures in the English Catholic school curriculum which provided little, if indeed anything at all, in the way of an understanding of Irish history, culture or ethnicity and as Walter's (2008a) study suggests awareness in the UK of the sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland during that period could account for one reason why Irishness might have been 'downplayed' in schools. Additionally, one teacher interviewed in the study suggests that "children themselves were ashamed of the association of Irishness with low social status and preferred to play down events which drew attention to their association with it, especially as they grew older and could make their own choices". (Walter, 2008a, p. 201). Seemingly reflecting this, Christian (1999) clearly remembers having to wear "rotting shamrock which would be sent in the post from our relatives in Ireland every St Patrick's Day" (p. 42). Though this suggests a certain negativity his later website posting in 2013 acts as a corrective:

As children we would get sent a pile of semi-rotting and yellowing shamrock every year in early March by our Aunty Mag in Dublin, which we all thought was really exciting, and got sent a novena of masses every Christmas which we found less so ..... It was a point of honour on St. Patrick's Day, to wear as much shamrock as you could - the ideal look was to end up with about the same amount of foliage as a Japanese soldier hiding out in Pacific island". (Christian, 2013b. para 10).

Christian thus expresses a child-like enthusiasm towards the shamrock as a particular manifestation of Irishness but an ambivalence towards symbols of religious observance. Nevertheless, allied to the shame he describes that his parents' generation carried with them, resonating with Christian's own trinity of Irishness; 'poor, emigrated and dead', it is no wonder that for some, prominent displays of Irishness were not high on the agenda. Both at home and in school Christian's identity was therefore being shaped within a delicate overarching narrative of Irish identification but which was subordinate to Catholicism.

The experience of "living in two different worlds" as Christian identified above,

is evident in many of the narratives we have explored. For Christian, being clever and passing the eleven plus placed him in two worlds where in one he could be justifiably pleased that he was making his mother proud of him through his academic achievements but in the other he was (a)shamed by this ability.

So out of 88 kids only 12 passed the 11 plus and my mam bragged about it. 'Oh our Terr'...she worked on school dinners there, at St Alphonsus, 'oh our Terry passed his 11 plus'. [This delivered in his own Mancunian voice and accent] and me and all me mates going 'shut the fuck up'. To them I wasn't going to a grammar school I was going to a puffs' school... and then what was worse with your mates was you became a story for their parents to have a go at them. 'Ah look at you, you layabout [this spoken in a Dublin accent particularly noticeable in the way he pronounces the word 'about'] going to that St Mary's – that Terry Christian, he's very clever, he's going to St Bede's, to become maybe, a ballet dancer, or something...' well that's what they thought, librarian, ballet dancer...[audience laughter]. (Christian, 2014a)

Interesting that Christian presumably accurately records both his mother's 'English accent' (recognising that she had lost her Irish accent on leaving Ireland in her youth) and the Dublin accent of his school friends' parents. The latter reminding us of his wider Irish and Catholic environment.

A section of his show relating to his schooling also included material about real instances of child abuse that occurred whilst he was studying at St. Bede's College in Whalley Range. The perpetrator, Father William Green, was jailed for six years in 2008 for paedophile acts.<sup>107</sup> Christian's material takes us through the story and it is not difficult to imagine the problems and internal negotiations and justifications inherent in the children's position, knowing what was going on and talking about it between themselves but not feeling that they could or even should tell someone about it.

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<sup>107</sup> See <http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/pervert-priest-jailed-968872>.

When it all came out, the story... the school, St Bede's which has now gone private, came out with all this sanctimonious hogwash 'Oh we had no idea, no idea, he only left in 1994, we had no idea he was doing this. In 1978 his nickname at St Bede's, was to 'frenchify' his name so Father Green became Pere Vert [*audience laughter*]. (Christian, 2014a).

The school's continued insistence that they knew nothing about these issues at the time placed Christian and the other children in an intractable and conflicted position.

His (Father Green/Pere Vert's) *modus operandi* was he used to invite boys up to his room at St Bede's, and he had a big Hornby train set there and he would ply them with booze. He had grappa... and cigarettes... and this is hard for me to admit, at St Bede's at the time as pupils we knew this was going on and our philosophy at this all boys school in Whalley Range was, 'if you're aged 14 and into model train sets you deserve been fuckin' bummed'. That is how twisted we were. (Christian, 2014a)

School caused further schism, as Christian noted in his Buxton Fringe show, reflected in the speech that his head teacher, a priest, gave at the start of the school year. This involved telling the pupils forcibly that they were there to learn so that they didn't end up as labourers or lorry drivers. As Christian's father had been both and still remained a driver, he proposed it was as though 'you had to deny who you were to get on' (Christian, 2014b). He had to 'pretend' to be one thing at school and another at home. His school, rather than giving him confidence, actually served to further lower his self-esteem. It would only be a short while however, until he found kindred spirits in school and once he realised that there were others like him there a close camaraderie emerged. "[We] weren't posh but we had each other and a rebellious streak. We were outsiders" (Christian, 1999, p. 23). Even this was pitched in terms of an insider/outsider positioning and a feeling of being second-class both in school and wider society. This sense of being second class, not good enough, always a sinner, is one that permeates Christian's stand-up show and his earlier writing. Part of his on-going concern with his own behaviour however, is his inability to keep quiet and the challenge he presents to the upper middle class hegemony within the media industries that employ him. He has engaged

consistently in multi-platform agitation throughout his career which in some ways demonstrates, despite his confessed low self-esteem, the growing confidence of the second generation or at least the residual anger of the economically poor and marginalized second generation and the confidence to speak about it. He concludes,

What qualifies a person to be famous and to want everyone to know who they are? It's not ten O levels and a degree in cybernetics, but more a venomous mixture of a big ego and low self-esteem, which more or less sums me up." (Christian, 2007, p. 83).

Even when recognisably 'infamous' and working in a high-profile job on Channel 4 TV he reflects, "What really bothered me at the time was the aching loneliness and isolation I felt. I just didn't fit in anywhere in my life and seemed to be surrounded by people who wished me ill" (Christian, 2007, p. 175). For Christian therefore, issues of class rather than ethnicity appear to be the major concern, and as inseparable as Irishness and Catholicism appear to be for many, for Christian the same intractability perhaps exists between Irishness, Catholicism and class. During his time on Channel 4's *The Word*, (August 1990 - March 1995) he noticed that despite his proven experience in music, as a manager of bands and as a DJ that had broken new music, a snobbishness existed within the production team at *The Word*, which he says was born of class. More broadly Christian (2007) observed,

A snob will never accept he is a snob any more than a racist will admit to being a racist. The facts are that everyone in the media who isn't from a middle class and/or Home Counties background sees the parochialism, hypocrisy and narrow mindedness within weeks of starting work, and the reason they choose not to mention it is because they are too afraid. After all, if you're an outsider in the business to start with, you have enough on your plate without sticking your head above the parapet and pointing out the obvious flaws in the system, especially if you want to prove yourself and get promoted". (P. 81)

Christian's 'outsider' narrative is clearly foregrounded and we may need to guard against this positionality being used simply to support a romanticised

view of the outsider particularly at school where such non-conformism may be seen as a badge of honour. For Christian's 'in-group' audience however, this outsider positioning is a compelling, recognisable and accommodating narrative device which makes heroic the self as the wronged and excluded actor in the story. However much this outsider narrative appears to be a creative and romantic device, Christian's work is underpinned by a shared experience which leads to cogent observation and analysis:

I used to wonder how educated people who came from working-class backgrounds could stand to work in a middle-class environment and get on. Were they traitors to their class, covering their accents, origins and political beliefs?... At first you live in two worlds, consciously holding on to your identity as you go down a new road... and one day you're there, coming out with all the same trite and anodyne opinions and all you've learned is how to take the blows and keep your mouth shut. Yet deep inside you scream rebellion. (Christian, 1999, p. 133)

Here, Christian voices the common perspective of living "in two different worlds". Yet there are the multiple layers to this as Christian considers class, ethnicity and politics. His conclusion is, that despite seeing through the facade of a seemingly principled class and colour-blind media meritocracy, most people simply keep quiet in order to get on. The suppression of marked difference is the key to getting on. We might usefully recall Harte's (2006) consideration of Naughton suggesting that "the best thing to do was... keep your mouth shut, stick to your job, and leave writing and the running of the world to your superiors and those in authority above you" (p. 237). Interestingly, Christian (2007) introduces us to his father's similar world view, "As for my Dad... his attitude was to grudgingly do as you were told and keep your lip buttoned" (p. 18). The political, economic and class differences, that Christian suggests are derived from ethnic origins, might have been internalized by some in pursuit of financial stability and professional development but any sense of resignation or of knowing your place, for Christian, was simply a mask behind which lay an inner rebellion.

It is interesting to surmise that Christian's particular struggle to 'fit in' and his feelings of "aching loneliness and isolation" may, in part at least, lie not only in

his understanding that he was marked as different due to his academic and intellectual capacity, his class, his Irishness and his Catholicism but also in his estranged relationship with traditional manifestations and performances of diasporic Irishness in Manchester at the time. We considered in the previous chapter, that it might not be so much the adoption and embracing of Irish culture and community that was a causal factor in the creation of a 'rootless' second generation Irish but rather the rejection of these aspects of our identities and Christian clearly indicates his estrangement from that wider world of Irishness. *Reds in the Hood* (1999) recalls his interest in a girl who he says was "... definitely the pick of a fairly good bunch, but she was an Irish girl" (p. 248). His nervousness in engaging with an Irish courtship encapsulated in the use of the word 'but' rather than 'and'. This recollection continues to describe a picture of Irishness easily recognisable to many emigrant families in England at the time (late 1970s), my own included.

Her parents were both from Co. Mayo, staunch Catholics with their own ideas on courtship even at that age. Old Trafford's Irish community was a B-Film scripted moral throwback to an Edna O'Brien Ireland of the 1950s with a touch of John Ford's *The Quiet Man* thrown in for good measure. It was a romantic ideal and even puppy love relationships were seen as a possible precursor to the sacrament of marriage". (Christian, 1999, p. 248)

This view of Ireland and the Irish that Christian describes was courtesy of Walt Disney he says, through films such as "*Darby O'Gill and The Little People* (1959) and *The Fighting Prince of Donegal* (1966)". John Ford's, *The Quiet Man* (1952) also played a part in (re)imagining Ireland for its displaced generations "with its winning portrayal of drunkenness, wife beating, fist fights and the happy-go lucky IRA men. Yes we lived in a kind of cultural amnesia." (Christian, 2013b. para 5). As this film is often accused of presenting a mythic, dream-like idyll to the diaspora, in effect, as Yu-Chen Lin (2010) suggested, "supplying a cultural memory that is most likely not there" (p. 40), it is interesting that for Christian it represents much that is wrong with the portrayal of the Irish and it becomes a legitimate target for his negativity towards misogyny, excess drinking and the glorification of violence in all its forms. Through its subsequent participation in the globalisation of 'brand Ireland' this



reinvention of Ireland has had more impact on the hegemonic discourse that 'admits' of Irishness and allows admittance to 'Irishness' than many may have previously credited. It also had an impact on the way that Christian viewed the Irish Mancunian diaspora. He continues his description of a night of attentive courtship in St Brendan's Catholic Club, Old Trafford, familiar to many UK based emigrant Irish:

And all the time the music blared from the Ranchers Showband below: 'The Wild side of life', 'I recall a Gypsy Woman', 'The Blanket on the Ground' and it was as if I experienced the whole thing by proxy. I was guided down the steps to the dance floor to join assorted O'Briens, Kellys, Donegans, Brogans, and partners for a slow dance to a romantic sounding air with far from romantic lyrics.

It was down in the town of old Bantry,  
Where most of the fighting was done.  
It was there that a young Irish soldier,  
was shot by a black and tan gun....<sup>108</sup>  
(Christian, 1999, p. 251)

Whether this proxy experience and his sense of distance was due to the drink or cultural alienation is unclear at this stage. Reflecting his own earlier summary that "In alcohol our elders were proud to be Irish", he reveals, "It wasn't Marvin Gaye singing 'Let's get it' on, but it certainly hit the spot with me and by the time the dance had finished I was more than ready to cry 'Up the Republic'" (Christian, 1999, p. 252). However, as the alcohol presumably wore off he concludes,

The night had taught me that, no matter how Irish my parents were, we didn't belong to that wild western Irish tribe with their country and western music, building trade money or reels like *The Siege of Ennis* and songs about martyred IRA men and ambushing Black and Tans. It was a life that could be open to me, but it was all too strange, something to escape from rather than embrace. But where would I be escaping too?" (Christian, 1999, pp. 252-253)

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<sup>108</sup> *Black and Tan Gun* (unknown writer and composer). Also the first song on the B-side of Irish Rebel Songs, Terry Christian's father's 'favourite record' and one owned by 'every Irish family in England'.

Christian is clearly removed, or clearly removes himself from, this picture of Irishness, one so easily recalled by contributors to this research and no doubt recognised by the majority of his live audiences. But what was it that separated him from that “wild western tribe” and what was he searching for?” Perhaps the key for Christian and others is in the strength of his identification with Manchester rather than Ireland or indeed England:

[I was] Mancunian first and Irish second. The Mancunian was more important: it had given my parents a place to work and a chance to live decent lives. No dewy-eyed sentiment in a young Republic of Ireland with all its inherited English snobberies could have given them that. (Christian, 1999, p. 254)

This particular Mancunian-Irishness was also captured in Christian’s devotion to his local football team, Manchester United:

Manchester, the great immigrant city of Europe with all its fearless passion for attacking football and glamour, splashing out money worth a couple of pools wins on players, was our Celtic pride: an antidote to various indignities life visited upon the members of our class, the immigrants team, the holy of holies for outsiders. (Christian, 1999, p. 254)

He invokes religious language to describe the affinity he believes existed between Irish emigrants and the Manchester United team of the 1960s and 70s and further ruminates,

Perhaps it’s because I attended Catholic school that United fans were always the most numerous. Manchester United were labelled as the Catholic club and even at that young age I knew that Matt Busby, Brian Kidd, Paddy Crerand, Shay Brennan, Nobby Stiles, John Fitzpatrick and Tommy Dunne were Catholics. (Christian, 1999, pp. 38–39).

This echoes the signalling of Catholic identity that my father engaged in that introduced this thesis and which referenced the Catholic and Irish backgrounds of people in the public eye. A clear association is made here in being Irish, Catholic and a Manchester United supporter. Other clubs have

similar associations most notably in Scotland, Celtic (Glasgow), and Hibernian (Edinburgh) and to a lesser extent south of the border where there have been strong connections between Irish supporters and some English football teams who have featured a strong line up of Irish players - teams such as Arsenal and Aston Villa for example. There remains a residual, if now more notional and historical, Catholic/Protestant divide between some clubs such as Liverpool and Everton, though this isn't as much of a sectarian divide as that seen in Glasgow between Celtic and Rangers or indeed even in Manchester between Manchester City and Manchester United. This proximity to Catholicism and immigration draws attention to aspects of Irishness but foregrounds the particular significance of and alignment to his geographical location, Manchester and provides one clear example of the association that the second-generation Irish have with their region or city through their hyphenated identities. Whilst in conversation with Christian it is clear that he considers himself far from "the Plastic Paddies in Old Trafford" that he closely observed in St Brendan's above "with their pre-ordained destinies and almost fanatical zeal for living a certain way" (Christian, 1999, p. 254), he does associate Irishness, or at least his Celtic pride, with Manchester United and by extension Ireland. Throughout his autobiographical performances and writing Manchester, followed by Irish and Catholic, if nothing else unambiguously excludes any reference to England or being English.

Ideas about respectability aren't as rigid in Manchester as elsewhere, being true to yourself and your tribe is all that's important. I loved my background and wanted to embrace it and show what a positive force it could be... (Christian, 2007, p. 70)

There is no reason to suspect that this would be any different in any other region of the UK and certainly in any region with a strong identity which may be distinct from Englishness - London, Birmingham, Liverpool for example, all major cities with long traditions of immigration, high populations of Irish amongst other immigrant groups, and strong regional identities. In this, we begin to see the often fierce pride that the second-generation Irish in England feel towards their home-towns and cities and that for many a strong regional identity leads the discourse around the second-generation Irish in Britain.

Eight years earlier Christian (1999) had written: “our Catholicism made us feel special, but we considered ourselves Mancunians first and Irish Catholic second” (p. 41). Interestingly he again fails to separate, or perhaps chooses to align, Irishness with Catholicism but places being Mancunian above all. One reason that such an emphasis is placed on English regionalism was offered earlier in that it is first and foremost a deliberate distancing of the individual from an English national identity. As descendants of the diaspora you had no choice or control over where you were born or what religion you were born into but perhaps through this geographical displacement, you have more choice over what you will not be. We hear from Christian, as we did from Sean and Niamh in Chapter 4, the strength of allegiance to Manchester and all that it offered being a key aspect of his background that he embraced and so fiercely presents. The sense of fluidity and of change Christian (1999) captures, “As we go through life we make more and more decisions which mean we leave our other selves behind” (p. 253). There is no sense here however of how deliberate or considered the decision might be or how contrived, controlled or accidental the outcomes. Turning away from the constructed Irishness of St Brendan’s and moving into the middle-class world of the media did nothing to establish a clear or positive sense of what he was becoming however and the resultant tensions continued to build.

... but whatever choices I make, one constant would run through them all: Inside I felt a lump, a malignancy like a belly ache of bitterness made up of a reservoir of slights, both real and imagined, of my own uncertainties about who I was, where I belonged and just all the crap things that felt as if they were building into a giant straw that would one day break the camel’s back. (Christian, 1999, pp. 253-254)

As a result, it appears that he lashed out at everything and anything, sending a “determined ‘sod off’ to English middle-class superiority” which he says was in his case, “down not just to being Irish and working-class but Mancunian”. (Christian, 1999, p. 81).

Running through Christian’s autobiographical and auto-ethnographic texts and performances, is a strong sense that his identity was formed in opposition to

almost everything he encountered, including the Irishness of his immediate home. Yet, the constant reminder of all that he did not want to be ultimately provides the foundations for what he is to become. There appears to have been dilution of an Irish identity in the home in favour of Catholicism. This possibly born of living in a household that was grieving following the death of his older sister aged 11.<sup>109</sup> Further, there was a dilution of Irish identity in school. Additionally, the confluence of a range of intertwining narratives, (con)tributaries of Englishness and anti-Englishness, Irishness and anti-Irishness, Catholicism, conformism and social-conditioning, anti-intellectualism and class-based snobbery, may all have led to the 'aching loneliness and isolation' he felt, born of a sense of un-belonging to anything or anyone. Simultaneously, he was influenced by close proximity to strict Jesuit beliefs and at distance by a child's understanding of paedophilia. Even the norms and expectations of the Manchester streets where he played as a child were based on a sense of belonging and 'unbelonging' as one or the other might result in you getting stoned, punched or chased back to your own street. 'Belonging' at that age often being decided on a street-by-street basis rather than any city, regional or national allegiance. Christian's sense of belonging it seems, comes through his allegiance to Manchester and his love of music. Both of these have however, seen him vilified. Firstly, through the binary opposition of City and United in football terms and secondly, as Christian believes, when ostracized earlier in his radio career for playing too much new music and too many up and coming unknown and 'niche' bands such as Oasis, Stone Roses and Happy Mondays, for bosses who were too focused on playlists and popular opinion. In a recent conversation with me, Christian expressed the view that he feels that he is still often overlooked despite the relative popularity of his current Imagine FM Sunday evening show *NWA (Northerners With Attitude)*. He is certainly knowledgeable about the impact that Irish, and in particular second generation Irish, musicians have had on music, on Manchester and more widely, and points out:

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<sup>109</sup> During our discussions and, not unsurprisingly perhaps in his act, Christian makes little reference to this experience, though the impact of such an occurrence cannot be underestimated.

In all aspects of the arts, and those left field areas of life, it's those with Irish catholic backgrounds that loom largest in Manchester. From bands like The Smiths and Oasis, half the Buzzcocks, The Courteners, even Herman's Hermits in the 1960s and to comedians like Steve Coogan, Caroline Aherne and Peter Kaye, and visionaries like the late Anthony H. Wilson, and his partner in Factory records who really built the Hacienda Club, Rob Gretton. The battle for freedom and to express yourself looms large in the Irish diaspora. (terrychristian.tv)

Sørensen's (2014) analysis of Christy Moore's<sup>110</sup> 2009 album release, *Listen*, proposes a revised view of Irishness or at least of recognizing Irishness which chimes with Higgin's observations of the impact of the globally dispersed diaspora in shaping Irish identity:

Even songs that are not specific in their references to Irishness, however, take on Irish resonances from the very framing they are exposed to, through the song selection as well as the performance aspects of the recording... I propose that this hybridity of new and old, foreign and national, might just be the most appropriate strategy for an updating of Irish identity through song. (pp. 222–223)

Christian's early life is framed within a seemingly ambivalent Irish, but certainly Catholic household, the performance aspects of much of his stage material are either literally or figuratively dressed in religious codes and vestments and usually with Irish accents. The discussion of urban working-class Manchester, Manchester United, the Catholic Church and his schooling all present a "hybridity of new and old, foreign and national". Through this performance, we are able to suggest a further strategy for identifying and describing forms of Irish identity which, although it continues to raise questions of authenticity for some and create areas of uncertainty and binary abstractions for others, can be confidently projected.

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<sup>110</sup> An Irish folk singer songwriter, Born Ireland 7<sup>th</sup> May 1945. Solo artist as well as founding member of Planxty and Moving Hearts.

Sørensen links to a very apposite discussion of Baumann in his consideration of second generation Irishness and perhaps of particular significance to Christian's strange and estranged relationship with Irishness *qua* Irishness. In search of a new perspective on identity Baumann (2005) offers:

Perhaps instead of identities, inherited or acquired, it would be more in keeping with the realities of the globalising world to speak of *identification*, a never-ending, always incomplete, unfinished and open ended activity in which we all, by necessity or choice, are engaged. (p. 453)

Recalling Jenkins (1996) understanding of identity which requires a 'simultaneous synthesis of internal self-definition and one's ascription by others' (p. 20) we can frame Christian's stand-up show and, therefore, his lived experience on which it is based, within precisely this 'always incomplete, unfinished and open ended' negotiation; a dialogue between his own definition of self and an external appreciation and pronouncement on who and what he currently is. The sense of an 'identification with' rather than a fixed 'identity of' suggests something much looser, much more aware and embracing of multiple possibilities and perhaps begins to make sense of the shifting and porous nature of identity whilst acknowledging major contributing and shaping cultural factors.

Christian finishes his performance with a particular act of confession, if not contrition, and calls for unity in response to his frustration with some of these contributory, shaping factors that continually reinforce the prevailing hegemony:

Deep down inside there's a part of me that would just like everyone... Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, you know Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, any other weird cult, scientologists, I would actually like to see... everyone come together... and attack those public-school twats I worked for at *The Word*. (Christian, 2014a)

The performance studies approach that underpins this chapter draws for its strength and purpose on Warren's claim that "the study of performance

provides a heuristic device for social constructionism". With Warren concluding,

Here, I locate the power of performance ethnography\*the ability (and lens) to see what is and imagine, through the analysis of everyday life performance, the mechanisms of production...Performance ethnography, as I have seen it written and lived, is about seeing the constructed nature of our lives and then interrupting that seemingly stable process. (Warren, 2006. p.318)

The analysis of Christian's everyday life through conversation, textual and performance analysis reveals much about the construction of that everyday life and in many ways, 'the mechanisms of production' that Warren considers above are laid bare in Christian's theatrical performance.

His book *My Word* opens with the question "Who the f\*\*\* does Terry Christian think he is?" It is a question that underpinned his earlier autobiographical reminiscence *Reds in the Hood* and interestingly, in spite of, or perhaps because of his recent incarnation as a stand-up performer, one perhaps now less often posed by outsiders, observers and audiences than by Christian himself. He considers class in his recollections and performances as much as ethnicity and religion but often sees these things as inseparable and interlinked as a Manchester-born second-generation Irish-Catholic man. As a sequence of hyphenated identity descriptors, inseparable and interlinked, this offers Christian a unique position within a common frame of reference to reflect on and project a recognisable experience of Irishness.

The last word should go to Terry Christian. In a Radio 4 interview as part of the BBC series Chain Reaction<sup>111</sup>, Comedian Martin 'Big Pig' Mor, interviewed Christian about his life and his new stand-up show *Naked Confessions of a*

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<sup>111</sup> Chain Reaction series 9. Episode transmitted 20.12.13. The BBC webpage declares "Before episode one there was episode nought. In this exclusive pre-series webisode, Northern Irish comedian Martin Mor talks to our first guest this series Terry Christian". Christian it appears was also scheduled to interview Caroline Aherne but unfortunately ill health prevented her from taking part.  
[http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01nsgz0?ns\\_mchannel=social&ns\\_campaign=bbc\\_radio\\_4&ns\\_source=twitter&ns\\_linkname=radio\\_and\\_music](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01nsgz0?ns_mchannel=social&ns_campaign=bbc_radio_4&ns_source=twitter&ns_linkname=radio_and_music).



*Recovering Catholic.* To close the interview Mor asks 'I'll give you the final word - Who is Terry Christian?' In recognition of the fluidity of identity and a sense of the process of becoming, Christian answers 'I don't know but I'm getting there'. (Christian, 2013a. 29:00).

## Chapter 6

### Steve Coogan

**“I’m a bit Irish... mmm you know what I mean”.<sup>112</sup>**

(Duncan Thicket, 17<sup>th</sup> October 1988)

Steven John Coogan was born in Middleton, a suburb to the north of Manchester city centre on October 4<sup>th</sup> 1965. Whilst both his parents were born in England, his maternal grandparents made the well-mapped journey from the West of Ireland to the Northwest of England in the 1930s. His paternal Great Grandfather also came to England from Ireland a generation earlier. Despite this potentially distancing generational lacuna between him and his Irish heritage, Coogan’s recent autobiography, *Easily distracted* (Coogan, 2015) spends much of its 340 pages reflecting on his childhood, issues of class, Catholicism and his Irish roots, and the centrality of his parents’ influence on his behaviour and to a lesser extent his subsequent character creations. Drawing on this, for my purposes, richly skewed autobiography, analysis of his career from the early days to his most recent feature film *Philomena*, a number of media interviews and articles and an interview that I undertook with him at his Baby Cow offices in London (November 20<sup>th</sup> 2015), I will offer an alternative reading of Coogan’s work framed within an English centric, yet clearly diasporic context. This proposes that an understanding of Coogan as an ‘Irish’ writer and performer informs not only our understanding of his creative outputs but also of his and our ‘English’ domestic realm and further informs an understanding of diasporic performances of identity more broadly. Once again, this chapter draws attention to Coogan’s background as

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<sup>112</sup> Coogan as Duncan Thicket in Thicket’s first radio performance 17.10.88. BBC Radio 4 Young Writers Festival. *The Word Made Fresh*. Extract rebroadcast as part of a BBC documentary *Knowing Steve: Knowing You*, broadcast 10.10.15.

autoethnographic source material for his creative leanings and mediated outputs but in doing so considers a much more rich and complex presentation of self than to be found in a surface reading of Terry Christian's stage show *Naked Confessions of a Recovering Catholic*.

If, as Seamus Heaney (1984) suggested, "Technique is what turns in Yeats phrase 'the bundle of accident and incoherence that sits down to breakfast' into 'an idea, something intended, complete.'" (p. 47), then perhaps both Coogan's life as lived, his evolving body of work and his autobiography are attempts through reflection and development, to turn his accidents and incoherence into something more complete. As Heaney (1984) also proposes, "Technique, as I would define it, involves not only a poet's way with words, his management of metre, rhythm and verbal texture; it involves also a definition of his stance towards life..." (p. 56) and capturing one of the thrusts of this thesis almost perfectly he continues, "... a dynamic alertness that mediates between the origins of feeling in memory and experience and the formal ploys that express these in a work of art" (p. 56). With this in mind, we will consider Coogan's re-remembering and re-narrativising of his personal memory and experience through his story-telling and performance. Our previous chapters have attempted to reconceptualise the idea of nation to unequivocally admit the diaspora, and as a result we might not only see the shadow of emigration reflected clearly in Coogan's life and work, falling across and influencing his own accidental narrative, but if, as Ryan (1990) suggests, "Emigration is a mirror in which the Irish nation can always see its true face" (pp. 45-46), we may also see the reflection of a 'true face' of a modern Ireland.

Modern Ireland can recount that "between the foundation of the Irish Free State in 1922 and the year 1982 one in every two persons born in Ireland left the country" (Kiberd. 2016, para 1). If even remotely representative, one aspect of this modern Ireland is the fragmented nature of family. The significance of this was clear to Coogan as he explained during our

interview<sup>113</sup>:

I was very aware of extended family... made very aware of extended family and the importance of it... it's only later on in life that you realise that not everyone has that... and... only in retrospect do you realise patterns and things that are peculiar to being of Irish descent.

(Personal Communication, November 11, 2015).

Coogan echoes the thoughts of many of my contributors, Niamh in particular in understanding that it was only in stepping away from the 'cocoon' of the family environment and towards independence and adulthood that one realises that childhood experiences were not universally shared and that there are other ways of being. In the Mancunian context that I have considered, the normative diasporic position became the unremarked and unremarkable Irish backdrop against which life unfolded. His childhood experiences, though not visibly supported in the immediate domestic realm within a constructed *mise-en-scène* of Irishness, was perhaps influenced by a *mise-en-place*<sup>114</sup> of Irishness, through discussion and debate concerning history and politics and with particular reference to the relationship between the Irish and the English. This environment, of *quasi* or extended post-memory, allied to his experiences in Ireland and of the Irish in England, placed Coogan within a rich and influential frame of Irish continuity.

For safety, his mother was sent back to Ireland during the war and as a result, her formative years were spent living and being schooled in Ireland. This may have amplified Coogan's Irish perspective, and he says of her experiences growing up in Ireland that she was,

Technically English because she was born in England so, er, she remembers history lessons where the teacher would (say) blame everything on the bloody English and she would feel

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<sup>113</sup> Interview recorded with Steve Coogan at his BabyCow offices in London. (20.11.15). Referenced throughout as Personal Communication, November 11, 2015.

<sup>114</sup> A culinary term describing the assembly of appropriate equipment and the preparation of ingredients before commencing cooking.

slightly self-conscious about the fact that she had technically been born in England, but to all intents and purposes, she is actually Irish and so we went back there every year, very aware of, erm, that that's where I come from, so I'm very aware of my heritage, very aware that I was a product of that and... so I feel like it's sort of in my veins.

(Personal Communication, November 11, 2015).

Whilst conversely there was no particular hostility towards the English in the Coogan household he recognises that there was separation between the two cultures which contributed to the dual nature of his identity as he understood it and from time to time our conversation came back around to how he would describe himself:

We were British and Irish, or English and Irish. We were aware of that, but we didn't want to fuse those two things, we believed in a United Ireland, but we also believed that, you know, the IRA was immoral and what they did was wrong, there was not this kind of tribalism. That was certainly the way I was raised.

(Personal Communication, November 11, 2015).

Later he tried again,

I'd say I'm British, but erm, er, but er, British of Irish descent...but what I was definitely aware of is that idea of being English but not quite English because of my background... and being suspicious... of Government and the Establishment as not necessarily having our best interests at heart.

(Personal Communication, November 11, 2015).

We hear uncertainty born of the absence of a name for this diasporic group, and in stumbling slightly over this description of himself, Coogan simply captures the current contradictions and tensions of a diaspora describing itself. Yet these tensions and uncertainties were ultimately to prove beneficial:

All these, all these Irish stories, and sometimes they are, they are definitely skewed and biased in a way to be sympathetic to the Irish, but they definitely informed my perspective of... suspicion and... sometimes hostility to... the Government, the Establishment, the powers that be, self-serving elite...I'm grateful for the background because I think it gave me a

different, a different view on things.  
(Personal Communication, November 11, 2015).

Whilst his response to the treatment of the Irish at the hands of the British Government is understated here, you do sense in conversation a genuine appreciation of the centuries of injustice and the unequal power relations between the two countries; a sense of injustice that is often handed on from generation to generation. We see and hear it in the lives of many of the second-generation Irish brought up on the rituals of Irishness and religiosity in England and it lies at the root of the epithet of Plastic Paddy. More seriously, this same sense of injustice can offer a real and ideological threat to the stability of the peace process in Northern Ireland. Extended to other marginalised ethnic groups, this sense of injustice and intolerance could be considered a contributory factor in the processes of more violent 'radicalisation'.

A further complexity in his understanding of self he describes on seeing the opening ceremony to the London 2012 Olympics. Coogan (2015) keenly points out that "everything I love about Britain was there. On the screen in front of me. History, the NHS, music, cinema... It was the first time I consciously thought 'oh yeah, this is my country too'". (p. 174). If this was the first time he had consciously recognized Britain as 'his country', then competing ideologies of ethnicity, religion and class, allied to a more consistent foregrounding of a Britain that he didn't recognize, conspired to raise the clear uncertainty of expression encountered in my interview. Whilst Coogan was made very aware of his Irish heritage, the history of oppression and mistreatment of the Irish by the English clearly discussed within the family environment, this was equally matched if not surpassed by the strong Catholicism that the family exhibited. These two elements were major influential factors in his early formative years. Indeed, his strongly expressed negativity towards organised Catholicism, if not individuals with a genuine and profound faith, is reflective of that. I asked him about the relationship between the two in his early life:

It was sort of all tied up with each other... it was about working-class solidarity, defending the poor. The Catholicism I grew up with was about helping the poor, helping people less well off than you, not being selfish, all tied up in Catholicism and Irishness, Irish Catholicism was coupled with a sort of... the religious zone coupled with a sort of sexual repression... a kind of a 'don't talk about... you know'. The working-class Irish side I think... there wasn't a lot of... emotional intimacy... but because I was raised in a Catholic parish... your Irishness was something to be proud of and to assert.  
(Personal Communication, November 11, 2015).

This solidarity of community was reflected in memories of his paternal grandfather who hired "the Astoria Ballrooms in Plymouth Grove Manchester in the 1950s so that he could put on big-band nights for the local working-class Irish community" (Coogan, 2015, p. 98). These nights provided an opportunity for the Irish to congregate. I picked up on this thread during our interview:

It [the big band nights at The Astoria] served really the Irish population... in Manchester, who interestingly didn't want to listen to Irish music, they wanted to listen to big band music... that tied up with the idea of the Irish wanting to hold on to their Irishness but also be aspirant and try and get a better life and I think Americana sort of had that promise of... a materially better life... They didn't want to listen to the music that reminded them of... poverty.  
(Personal Communication, November 11, 2015).

Coogan's autobiography, *Easily distracted* (2015), includes reference to his altar boy training, the structure of his Sundays beginning with Mass at 11am at which his father read the lessons, and the sense of achievement and seeming satisfaction, warmth and security that this ritual (morning Mass, buying the paper and then home for Sunday lunch) offered the young Coogan. The Catholic rituals of and surrounding weekly church attendance, strong family structures and a recognition of the Irish community around him looms large in his memory and has seemingly gone on to inform his work and outlook. Later in our interview he expanded on this:

It's the strangest combination of Northern, of Catholic and of Irish and being aware of your own background, to be able to laugh at it, er, humour being something which is free... So it's

open to people who are poor, which I think is rather why poor people gravitate to it, but also a way of mitigating hardship. I mean, I'm talking about generations past, you know, I haven't gone through any particular hardship. I think certainly that just got off the boat, scrimping and saving was informed er... the kind of atmosphere where you create comedy... that's certainly something that runs through people from an Irish background. (Personal Communication, November 11, 2015).

These differing contributory strands may not however, be purely a source of humour but also, as we have heard in Chapter 4, sources of tension. Higgins' description of identity formation and confirmation eloquently captured in its use of the image of the shell, endlessly circulating voices from our past, encapsulates these competing and sometimes contradictory strands. With humour often relying on tension for its power and penetration, the contradictions in Coogan's life provide both the roots of his tensions and of his comic creativity. The resulting contingent positionality born of his personal diasporic narrative of displacement, estrangement and post memory seemingly continued to cloud Coogan's perspective. Yet, the image of these differing voices whispering through the shell of history and consolidated through his education, religious observance and home life provides a rich, integral and overarching *mise-en-scène* against which Coogan's personal and social identity could emerge. Furthermore, this also provided the essential *mise-en-place*, the ideological tools of the trade, for the development of his future professional outputs. From Higgins to Coogan and from O'Toole on MacDonagh, the notion of being surrounded by voices whispering of history and identity, is a repeated motif in the interrogation of identity formation and of creative influences, processes and practices. As Coogan (2015) identifies, "I am a product of my Catholic upbringing. Of my Irish roots. Of my lower middle-class background. Of the north. Of suburbia. Of the grammar school system. Of the television generation" (p. 93).

The duality of the Coogan family's cultural allegiance was underlined by an informed understanding of the complications of being second and third generation Irish in England in the case of both Coogan's parents and their children. They were provided with an historical context which perhaps allowed



them to view the world from an English, Socialist, Irish, Catholic perspective, in which England was recognised as the oppressor but from within which they recognized both their Englishness and their Irishness. There was seeming parity between the cultures yet at times, when discussing history for example, one outweighed the other in terms of significance. An understanding of his Irish heritage allowed him to grow up with a view of himself as 'half Irish and half English'. As a result, his idea of 'home' is tested when he considers his return visits to Ireland.

It was always the idea of going home and I would say, why are they saying going home? My home is England. But they would always say 'when are you coming home?' And I sort of became, I suppose it's sort of my Mother's home and therefore, it's sort of the home before I was born. It's the home, yeah.  
(Personal Communication, November 11, 2015).

Once again, Coogan's struggle with a clear definition, this time of 'home', was audible in his delivery. The final realisation being that whilst England might be a home, so too is Ireland. He recalls his family telephoning Ireland at a time when few people there had such means of communication:

There was a handful of people with phones. But even when you spoke to the operator in the town nearby, they would say 'who is it calling?' And... the operator would say 'Oh, are you coming home this year?' Yeah. The operator at the depot, the phone exchange, would know who you were. Those connections, being aware of that, is something, er, of being half Irish and half English. Very aware of that growing up. Very conscious of it.  
(Personal Communication, November 11, 2015).

The duality Coogan encountered in terms of personal identity is often presented as a problem or an obstacle to be navigated. Billig (1995) alludes to the tangible manifestation of this when discussing national identity. He suggests, "... national identity is more than an inner psychological state or an individual self-definition: it is a form of life, which is daily lived in the world of nation-states" (p. 69). Problematically, the inner self-definition may not necessarily be contingent on external receptivity, though it may be challenged by it, but its outer representation may need to be modified. As Christian (1999)

observed, “what you’ve learned is how to take the blows and keep your mouth shut. Yet deep inside you scream rebellion” (p. 133). As a result of the foregrounding of the Irish and Catholic aspects of home life, schooling, social networks and the ghettoised experience of their urban/suburban environment, for many of my interviewees it was the English were effectively ‘othered’. Only in later life, on working and socialising with this English ‘other’ did they appreciate that not everyone was surrounded by their same experiences and lifestyle and at this point their inner self-definition was tested. The strangeness of the English other became familiar to them and in seeing themselves in proximity to, and via this new perspective, once familiar ‘Irishnesses’ began to appear strange.

If, as Higgins (2016) has suggested, “... everything that is really interesting happens in the interstices of narratives” (p. 40), it is perhaps in these interstices that Coogan’s awakening sense of intimacy and difference were established, and his ability to claim narrative agency as a diasporic writer and performer grounded. In discussing his work, we will hear of the initial uncertainty of this interstitial position, resulting in a lack of confidence in his ability to speak of his position, eventually becoming the authorial voice of his present in both his public and private lives. As an audience, we may then judge whether the resulting voice is authentic, authorial or both. Whilst a negative implication of seeking authenticity can be a mimesis of the past, suggesting evolutionary stagnation, the authorial is arguably the most powerful and yet divisive voice if it is perceived as lacking authenticity. Yet it can draw on the past and trace a lineage from the past into an authenticity that is not false, neither copied, nor adopted, but singular and real. Perhaps this authorial voice is the final act of identity formation; the point at which the confidence to narrate your own life meets with a belief in your ability to influence your future and activates social, political and individual agency. We will see that through such a recursively constructed diasporic identity, Coogan writes, sings and otherwise performs himself into existence. That this should produce such grotesques as Alan Partridge and such work as *Philomena* which both mask and illuminate aspects of a social and political Post-Colonial legacy and discourse, is at once something quite remarkable.

The captivating title of Wendy Doniger's (2006) book is most illuminating in this context. *The woman who pretended to be who she was: Myths of self-imitation* (Doniger, 2006), considers the TV programme *Ten Years Younger* to illuminate the issue of semblance versus substance and the outer presentation of self (not) reflecting the inner being. In considering Doniger's argument, Lawler (2007) determines,

The woman becomes who she 'really' is by changing the 'exterior' manifestation of her-self. This is one manifestation of an old and widespread theme, which might appear to be paradoxical – that is, using a mask (in this case the botox, the hairstyle, the new clothes) to show who you *really* are. (p. 103)

Of the mask and reveal conundrum, Lawler (2007) further proposes:

We assume that masquerades lie, and often they do, at least on the surface. But often masquerades tell a deeper truth, that masquerading as ourselves reaffirms an enduring self (or network of selves) inside us, which does not change even if our masquerades, intentional or helpless, make us look different to others. (p. 103)

These examples take slightly differing views of the same issue, and indicate that one can deliberately adopt a mask to show who you really are or adopt a mask to pretend to be other than you really are, and in doing so intentionally or unintentionally, reveal the real self. In either case, a visual (re) presentation of the real person is provided, a sense of both the authorial and the authentic physically presented and performed. Lawler (2007), drawing on her reconsideration of Erving Goffmann's work further concludes, "the person, for Goffman, is not *behind* the mask; rather, it *is* the mask" (p. 108). That the person is the mask, that in the person can be found the third space, and that the person, the self, is the site of the generation of identity, seems to be becoming clearer.

John Walsh's perceptive and at times comically accurate autobiography, *Fallen Angels* recreates memories of his childhood growing up in Battersea,

South London, of Irish parents. He intriguingly introduces the notion that “In Irish, the verb for ‘pretend’ also means ‘reveal’, as if they were interchangeable...” (Walsh, 2011, p. 88). It has resonance with our own term, ‘fabrication’, which can be a falsehood or an artifice which deceives or misleads but can also be a skilfully built artefact which provides shelter, warmth and security. Walsh’s assertion that the words pretend and reveal are interchangeable resonate both with Goffman’s approach to understanding identity and the performance of identity, and directly with our interrogation of performers such as Steve Coogan who may advertently or inadvertently make revelation through their pretence. Within Walsh’s linguistic suggestion, revelation and disguise become further highlighted as appropriate reflections on identity development as the layers are removed to reveal or added to fabricate. Coogan recognises that in a fabrication such as Partridge aspects of his identity and outlook are contained. We must therefore at this stage tentatively conclude that in many other notional “versions of Steve Coogan” (Coogan, 2015, p. ix), there is equal recognition and revelation. Whether these reveal an informed second/third generation Irish perspective on the world, a more broadly diasporic view or neither, we may eventually judge. What is becoming clearer however, is that these additional masks and layers will not necessarily obscure.

This oscillation between the sometimes binary yet contiguous proximity of Irish assimilation and Irish exclusivity, simultaneously a distancing and an engaging technique, is considered in Coogan’s autobiography and has had a significant impact on his ability to reflect in his creative outputs a view of heightened middle-England perspectives and Irish sensibilities. Tom Maguire (2009) identifies a parallel in relation to Martin McDonagh:

Martin McDonagh was brought up in London within the expatriate Irish community, spending most of his childhood summers at the home of his grandparents in Connemara... he is regarded as a satirist of Irish cultural representations, a position facilitated by his English vantage point. (p. 168).

It is this same perspective that allows Steve Coogan, Caroline Aherne, and Peter Kay, for example, to present characters of almost quintessential Englishness and to offer informed, irreverent and/or conceited takes on English cultural mores. His estranged once/twice-removed Irishness and his estranged removed Englishness offering him a vantage point as an insider hiding in plain sight and as a stranger walking unmarked. McDonagh's influential childhood is reflected in Coogan's experiences in Ireland's 'Wild West', as Christian would characterise it, in the family home between Castlebar and Westport in County Mayo. In conversation, Coogan remembers:

At the time it was adventure. It was exciting. They didn't have, they had a fire and cooked the food on the fire, and they didn't have hot running water, we had to be soaked, sponged down standing up in a bowl... But to us it was just different and interesting, like an adventure, like a storybook... We'd sleep top-to-tail in a bed with a broken mattress, and just play, and the landscape seemed to go on forever... And the smell of a peat fire now to me really is incredibly evocative. I think probably it was my favourite smell in the whole world is the smell of a peat, er, fire, because it brings back too many happy memories for me... holidays to Ireland to me were a very exciting thing a part of what defined me...  
(Personal Communication, November 11, 2015).

Coogan speaks very quickly during this part of the interview moving rapidly from one idea and one recollection to the next. There is a real lightness and warmth in his expression, in contrast to other aspects of the interview, from which you gain a sense that he loved and loves that time in his life. He clearly takes pleasure in having had those experiences as part of his life, which he sees as contributing fundamentally to the defining of his character and outlook. Similarly, fragmented memories spill out on two pages of his autobiography as he describes a Morris Traveller he bought earlier in his career, the same make of car he used to travel to Ireland in with his family as a child:

The incredible rush of nostalgia...the smell of the vinyl seats, petrol and, more subtly, oil. A slight trace of damp that takes me right back to Uncle Johnny's farmhouse in a sleepy Irish village. I can smell the wet turf and even burning peat. It's the most

powerful smell in the world for me. Nothing is so transporting, so evocative. As I sit in the car I experience an overwhelming sense of warmth, security and extended family. (Coogan, 2015, p. 105)

He demonstrates willingly through his autobiography, and more naturally during our interview, his right to claim a sense of Irishness which is based on strong family connections, affinity with its people both in England and Ireland itself and a knowledge of the landscape and geography. That this may actually be based a nostalgic, romanticised and almost hyper-real version of the past, or just a child-like memory is not a primary consideration, what is important for Coogan and his masquerades however, is the legacy of these experiences, coupled with the experience of growing up amongst and aware of the Irish diaspora in North Manchester.

A single taxonomy of Coogan's creative output is not easily formed, but I identify three overlapping themes in Coogan's work to date. First, those works that are concerned with his commentary, knowingly or otherwise, on English modes and mores through such character creations as Duncan Thicket, Earnest Moss, Saxondale, and of course the many iterations of Alan Partridge. Second, those in which he plays versions of himself, for example in *Coffee and cigarettes* (Jarmusch, 2003), *The life and times of Tristram Shandy: A cock and bull story* (Winterbottom, 2005), and *The trip* (Winterbottom, 2010a). Third, the more recent of his outputs which draw more directly on his relationship with Ireland, such as the TV mockumentary *Steve Coogan: The Inside Story* (Coogan, Davis, Mortimer & Reeves 2009), in which he portrays his Irish 'aunt', Auntie Peggy - *Moone Boy* (Murphy & O'Dowd, 2012) in which he plays the character of Francis 'Touchy' Feeley, and most notably perhaps his 2014 film release *Philomena* (Coogan & Pope, 2013). I will consider each of these in turn, suggesting a re-reading of his work from our established diasporic perspective.

Coogan appreciates, or has a growing appreciation of how much of himself is discernible within his characters, more perhaps than both he and we might have initially thought. Coogan's (2015) autobiography suggests,

Most of my life has been spent wanting to be someone else. If I pretended to be other people, then I didn't have to be me.... When I first did stand-up, I did impressions. When I did my act, I would do rather distant pompous versions of myself. I continued to do versions of myself in *Coffee and Cigarettes*, *A Cock and Bull Story* and *The Trip*. All of which is saying. 'This is not me'. Well, all right, it's a little bit of me. Until now I've shared only versions of Steve Coogan. (p. ix)

Coogan is arguably sharing just another version of himself in this autobiography, albeit one perhaps more knowingly self-drawn than other performances of Coogan-ness; those bounded by the frames of traditional or recognisable theatrical and media codes and conventions and those of a more personal and yet often equally public nature.

Into the first of these three proposed areas of consideration falls a body of work from his early appearances in stand-up on radio and television. The radio documentary *Knowing Steve: Knowing you* (Cottrell-Boyce, 2015), in which Coogan is interviewed about his life and work by Frank Cottrell Boyce, includes the earliest known recording of one of his very first character creations, Duncan Thicket. His autobiography recalls,

Duncan was, at this stage, a nascent character, a little voice that had started out in my head and had grown into an inadequate fool.... It was my first foray into the comedy of embarrassment which I would later revisit as Alan Partridge" (Coogan, 2015, p. 243).

This 'embarrassment' factor is a trait encompassed by a number of these early characters and is clearly present in Thicket with his rambling, unconfident, delivery style coupled with his complete lack of awareness and self-awareness (in this description at least) and who now seems like an early if unexpected precursor to Alan Partridge. Contrastingly, Thicket's lack of confidence becomes a strength and endears him to his audience whereas Partridge's confidence more often than not emphasises his small minded, middle-Englander bigotry which makes the audience have to work harder to feel sympathy for the character. This extract included in the 2015 Cottrell-Boyce

interview includes Thicket's very first performance recorded on stage in 1988. A formulaic joke is delivered as follows,

Thicket: Well then, well then, what about the Irish Lamp post yeah... what about the Irish lamp post... it pissed on a dog... stupidly... it's good that your laughin', it's good that - no offence to Irish people when I say that 'cos you know like, I'm a bit Irish mmm you know what I mean<sup>115</sup>. (Cottrell-Boyce, 2015. 16:00).

Schechner (2003) explains a Freudian take on comedy and,

... how farce especially, and maybe all theatre, accomplishes the complicated task of uniting an in-group, threatening an out-group and bringing repressed materials to the surface... A successful joke and farce is a string of jokes comprising a coherent structure that is itself a joke - is an extremely dense, specially coded communication. (p. 281)

The point of departure, uncertainty and discomfort is how you as viewer position yourself and how you understand or interpret your position relative to others. Being appropriately placed culturally and in terms of identity to be able to decode the material and understand whether you belong to the 'in-group' or an 'out-group' is a key component of the satirist's armoury. It doesn't matter if you 'get it' or not, that only extends the joke.

It is difficult in retrospect to know whether the follow up to the gag 'no offence to Irish people... I'm a bit Irish', was introduced on the spot to diffuse a potentially racist joke or whether Coogan was seeking some sense of identification with the minority group and the audience, which then *allowed* him to tell such a racially fuelled joke. Through the throwaway disclosure of Thicket's and, of course, Coogan's, Irishness we are being handed both a request for derogation from the acceptable norms of alternative comedy and its more inclusive approach to material and an insight into Coogan's

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<sup>115</sup> Coogan as Duncan Thicket in Thicket's first radio performance was part of BBC Radio 4 Young Writers Festival *The Word Made Fresh*. (First transmitted 17.10.88).



upbringing and influences. As Schechner (2003) suggests, “glimpsing brief, but deep, looks into the ‘real person’” (p. 44). It appears from the audience reaction on the recording that as Thicket is self-deprecating and self-mocking, though without self-awareness, the audience ‘get’ the joke in the spirit it was presumably intended, as the product of an inadequate and naïve fool. The laughter also suggests some level of agreement on Coogan’s ‘authenticity’ in terms of his Irishness and an assertion from the audience that Thicket/Coogan is entitled to make such a joke. The truth of what Thicket was saying is not in the surface reading of the gag as an anti-Irish taunt but that through the medium of the inadequate fool Duncan Thicket, Coogan pokes fun at the previous decade of comedians who used ethnicity as a basis for their humour whilst simultaneously claiming and broadcasting his own Irishness to multiple live audiences. If, as we have considered, one method of claiming a sense of Irishness is through a display of knowledge about Ireland, geographical, political, sporting knowledge for example, Coogan cuts through this and simply claims he is “a bit Irish”. I would argue that Thicket’s tag line, deliberately delivered towards the beginning of his set in one of his earliest widely heard performances, is not simply a joke told to emphasise the character’s inadequacy but a deliberate statement designed to highlight the ignorance of previous generations of comedians (and perhaps audiences), and, in the public claiming of ethnicity through his character creation, proclaim and substantiate his credentials as an ‘Irish’ man if not necessarily an Irish comedian. Here, we observe Coogan’s personal and social performance cascading into his professional performance, affirming his position in relation to England and Ireland and his audience. In accepting that it is through the engagement with an audience that collective personal performances, negotiated in response to those audiences give substance to personal and social identity, then this is equally true of the professional considered performance through which the personal has been revealed.

Interestingly, when considering Coogan’s autobiography and various interviews over the years there is a sense that Thicket is indeed closer to Coogan than might be thought. Coogan expresses his sense of inadequacy when working with comedians, writers and producers from a ‘higher class’ of

university than his own Polytechnic and more generally just from a higher social 'class'. He writes in particular of his feelings of inadequacy when associating with Oxbridge and 'Red Brick' educated comedians, writers and producers whilst working on *On the hour* (Glover et al., 1991) and *The day today* (Baynham et al., 1994):

At the start of my career, when I'd worked with Armando Iannucci, Chris Morris and Patrick (Marber) on Radio 4's *On The Hour*, I'd come into contact with an endless stream of people who were über confident and had been educated at Britain's finest Universities. I, meanwhile, was a grammar school kid, from a Manchester suburb who had failed English O level not once, but twice, I resat it for the first time in the lower sixth and, like a dunce, failed it again. This might be a class thing, but I never felt like I was the person running the shop. I was never in charge. I wasn't officer material. We the lower middle-class, are destined to be corporals, or sergeants at best. (Coogan, 2015, pp. 17–18)

His experience when auditioning for drama schools in the 1980s is also very revealing:

...At the audition for the central school of speech and drama everyone seemed to be called Sebastian or Julian. While I was waiting, a bloke with Byronic hair, a long overcoat and a statement scarf strode in, thrust his hand into the principal's, shook it manfully and said rather loudly, 'You know my father?. He works for the BBC world service.'  
'Ah yes' responded the teacher clasping the applicant's hands with both of his.  
More bollocks was spoken, with sacksful of confident laughter. (Coogan, 2015, p. 238).

This story obviously has personal and comic resonance for Coogan as he repeated it during the Cottrell-Boyce interview and he still harbours some negativity towards the fact that he did not get offered a place at a specialist drama school, and that you also had to pay for the privilege of putting yourself through that process.

This lack of confidence highlighted by his proximity to others of a different social class or who attended a higher-ranking university, seemingly provided

Coogan with the springboard he needed to leap into a more satisfying environment and one which was more of his own creation. In that sense, growing up in England provided the alterity he required to flourish with the unease he felt amongst his Oxbridge co-performers and writers providing the opposition for his creative confidence to emerge. A confidence which would, through Coogan's life and work, Harte (2006) might suggest, allow him to move from being "the anonymous object of speculation into a known narrator of his "specific personal histories" (p. 226) in other words "to seize the power to narrate" (p. 226). Unfortunately, Coogan has also been a provider of material for others to narrate his personal histories. He has long been seen as source material for the press in respect of his alleged and self-confessed alcohol and drug-fuelled episodes and this of course took on a particular and high profile position during the *News of the World* phone tapping scandal and his 2011 appearance in front of the Leveson Enquiry.<sup>116</sup> Though he would also naturally prefer that attention were concentrated on his work as a vehicle for his expression of self than on the mediated representation of the self we see reflected in the popular press. In discussion with Cottrell-Boyce, Coogan explains which of his characters most resembles Coogan himself:

*Saxondale* is probably closest to who I am... there's definitely an angry, Chippy working-class part of me, even though I just am lower middle-class. There's a very enjoyable, the Emperor's clothes, the boy who points at the emperor's clothes, I mean Alan and Paul both have that quality, of debunking... you can say things which are ignorant sometimes and you laugh at the ignorance, sometimes you laugh at the fact they are saying something that is a kind of truth that no one dare speak. (Cottrell-Boyce, 2015. 45:00)

As an aside, it may be noteworthy, that many of Coogan's characters use very 'English' sounding names, Calf, Cheeseman, Partridge, Moss, and Saxondale. This may be unintentional or a device to reduce the opportunity for accusations

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<sup>116</sup> This was a two-part inquiry investigating the role of the press and police in the phone-hacking scandal, announced on 13 July 2011. Lord Justice Leveson was appointed as Chairman of the Inquiry. Further details: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140122145147/http://www.levesoninquiry.org.uk/>.

of racially motivated humour. Arguably overthinking the point, there is ambiguity in the choice of the name Tommy Saxondale as the Saxons were originally an invading force who presumably wrestled identity struggles of their own as a diasporic group, resulting in the commonly understood hyphenated Anglo-Saxon moniker becoming a 'proto' English descriptor.

Saxondale is a speaker of the truth, direct, often negative and very cynical. He possesses however, certainly to a higher degree than some of Coogan's other early characters, self-awareness. Saxondale is not afraid to speak his mind but knows that he is arrogant, his confidence partly informed by his role as a former roadie for a rock group before moving into his current job as a pest controller. He is a bit of a 'know-it-all' with anger management issues, yet he is seeking help through attendance at anger-management courses. The world is both an all too familiar place whilst also being a mystery to him. He lives between two worlds, both equally 'unreal'. Perhaps this is one of Coogan's greatest abilities, that of being able to create characters that are situated sometimes physically and geographically and at others both conceptually and knowingly between two worlds. An optimal example would be Coogan's most famous character, Alan Partridge. Although early incarnations of Partridge were introduced to the world in both *On the hour* (Glover et al., 1991) and *The day today* (Baynham et al., 1994), when we meet Alan again in the series *I'm Alan Partridge*, (Baynham, Coogan & Iannucci, 1997) he is living in a motorway motel, The Linton Tavern, a place associated with journeys but not a destination point in itself.<sup>117</sup> It exists between a point of departure and a point of arrival, or, as Higgins (2016) would describe, "the place of origin and

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<sup>117</sup> The *I'm Alan Partridge Trivia* page reads much like a Partridge script itself. "Linton has become famous through fictional character Alan Partridge, who once justified his extended stay at the Linton Travel Tavern by claiming that Linton is equidistant between London and Norwich. Indeed, Linton is near the halfway point of the London-to-Norwich A11 trunk road, although some four miles from the actual road, which suggests that the travel tavern was not in Linton itself, but nearby on the A11. Even in this location, the travel tavern is probably farther than Partridge would have wanted from the M11 motorway, to which he once walked to purchase several bottles of windscreen-washer fluid from a petrol station. However, the actual location used for the BBC television series was the Hilton Hotel on the A41 near Bushey in south Hertfordshire". Extract originally available in wikipedia now available at <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0129690/trivia> (retrieved from IMDB 14.02.17)

final destination” (p. 40). From here Partridge moves to a caravan, intended as a temporary dwelling between homes, and immediately adjacent to his new, but still under construction home. In many ways, Partridge is forever in reach of a final destination but never quite gets there. He can visit, but he never remains. This subtext works both as an underlying plot device for Partridge and a reflection on Coogan’s view of his own career which he explores more openly throughout his travelogue (rather than Travel Lodge™ series) *The trip* (Winterbottom, 2010a) and an allegory perhaps for the Irish diaspora.

Some audiences will recognise this interstitial existence of many of Coogan’s characters who often lack self-awareness and empathy and often therefore live and operate in hinterlands outside normative societal expectations. Perhaps too, it is in the shared understanding of such character positioning that the Irish diaspora, can ascribe authenticity to Coogan and his creations. Lawler (2007) considers

... the three components which Paul Ricoeur.... identifies as being crucial to narratives: characters, action and plot... Events are not thrown together at random, but are linked together. Both the narrator and the audience will participate in the processes of linking – which Ricoeur calls ‘emplotment’ – through shared cultural understandings that *these* events have a place in *this* narrative. (p. 11)

Whilst this particular perspective is aired within the context of fiction, it can equally be applied to the live stand-up performer and performance more generally. It is perhaps slightly more complex when we are unsure where a character creation begins and where the actor/individual ends but that there is confluence is perhaps assured. This confluence both disguises and illuminates personal identity formations even in the seemingly throwaway remark of Thicket’s, discussed above, and in the development of Partridge and his use as a response to small-minded middle England mores, sensibilities and beliefs, and even perhaps in Paul Calf’s reactionary position on student/middle class entitlement. As Hacking (in Lawler 2007) concludes,

We constitute our souls by making up our lives, that is, by weaving stories about our past, by what we call memories. The tales we tell of ourselves and to ourselves are not a matter of recording what we have done and how we felt. They must mesh with the rest of the world and with other people's stories, at least in externals, but their real role is the creation of a life, a character. (p. 17)

Hacking does not separate the creation of a 'life' from the creation of a 'character'. It is therefore possible that Coogan, through his character creations, is creating both, and sometimes as one, based on the retelling, or a re-narrativising over time of his own experiences. As Harte (2006) describes it, "translating oneself into a character in one's own story" (p. 226). This is therefore, no metaphysical construct for a writer or particularly a performer, it is rather both a literal and metaphorical act. Conversely, in relation to Harte's original position, what we may be witnessing with Coogan's multiple character creations is the translation of one's characters into oneself to claim narrative agency and to substantiate a sense of 'authenticity'. Memory, of course, plays a significant part in this process and both 'real life' and 'character', if they can indeed be separated, are the activation of this embodied archive. John Thompson<sup>118</sup>, an erstwhile collaborator of Coogan's, would tend to agree in this description of the relationship between Coogan and his character creation Alan Partridge from the radio documentary *Knowing Steve: Knowing you*:

*When I see Steve do Alan Partridge it is Steve at his worst in real life – everyone will tell you that. I've got a theory that comedians who create characters create their dark half, and manifest it on stage or in drama. For example, Brian Potter is Peter Kaye's dark half, that's Peter at his worst. Alan Partridge is Steve Coogan at his worst... he's a formidable character despite the fact he's a very weak person [here presumably talking about Partridge not Coogan] – there's something about Alan that you wouldn't want to get on the wrong side of him really, despite all his faults, I'm a bit scared of Alan Partridge if you want my honest opinion. (Cottrell-Boyce, 2015, 52:40).*

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<sup>118</sup> Also of note is that John Thompson was himself born to an Irish Catholic mother but was given up for adoption at an early age.

That Thompson chooses Peter Kay as his comparator here is noteworthy. Obviously, Kay is another North West born comedian who would be known to both Coogan and Thompson, but he is also another second-generation Irish comedian, his mother originally from Northern Ireland. That comedians plough the darkest aspects of themselves to find the best in their characters suggests these characters are not so much a mask or a masquerade as a magnifying glass, which allows us to see into the core of their creator. Interestingly, Coogan's autobiography describes the way he develops his characters that neatly reflects Doniger's observation (in Lawler 2007) that "masquerades tell a deeper truth" (p. 103) and that we become who we are by changing our external appearance. "Paradoxically" Coogan (2015) states, "starting with the exterior aspects of a character helps me then go back inside and find out who that person is" (p. 264). For Lawler, this is the essence of the mask. Whilst it may conceal certain aspects, traits or concerns of the individual it will also reveal the same. In one sense perhaps, we should always judge a book by its cover.

Alan Partridge clearly derives from Coogan's view of stereotypical middle England sensibilities and prejudices for its foundation. The early manifestations of Partridge, particularly visible in *On the hour* (Glover et al., 1991) and *The day today* (Baynham et al., 1994) were harsher than the later adaptations seen in *Knowing me: Knowing you* (Coogan et al., 1994) and *I'm Alan Partridge* (Baynham et al., 1997), though the essential character traits were maintained. A lack of self-awareness, a veneer of specialist knowledge and a surface confidence in the early days were coupled with a slightly colder, more sneering and much more distant manifestation of the character. Certainly, the warmth came later. I asked Coogan about the origination and development of this character and how perspectives might change when exploring aspects of his character.

I quite like Alan Partridge even though I don't really like his values. He's a buffoon. I don't want to caricature him to death, so, as he's evolved I've given him a bit of humanity - like just give him a break, cut him a bit of slack, it's not his fault, he's a small-minded Little Englander, you know.

(Personal communication, November 20, 2015)

This view of the “small-minded Little Englander” seemed to be formed at a young age. Coogan later returned to this issue during our conversation providing into a short introduction/deconstruction of Partridge resulting from living as a child between two worlds:

... what I was definitely aware of is that idea of being English but not quite English because of my background and... that, the creation of Alan Partridge was in some way my kind of, erm, the genesis of it, early on, merged into an opportunity to attack, if you like, everything I loathe about the small-minded Little Englander. Because that is one thing that we weren't, the kind of Nationalistic idiots; we were not flag-wavers. We never waved the British flag, that would be moronic I suppose, and not because of like anti-Britishness. It was just a kind of, we were aware that the British hadn't always been nice to people and the Irish were on the receiving end of that.

(Personal communication, November 20, 2015)

His distance from the British, but more accurately the English, as a direct result of his proximity to Irish sensibilities and concerns, enabled him not only to see what it was that he clearly disliked about the “Little Englander” perspective but also to begin to critique it through his characters, most clearly perhaps through the creation of Alan Partridge. Coincidental to his view of this generic mindless, proud, “Little Englander” was his as yet nascent ability or certainly nascent confidence to assert his particular views or observations both in everyday life and through his characters. Returning to his childhood during our interview, I picked up on another reason why the Coogans may not have been the ‘flag-waving’ type.

In lieu of not making a fuss or showing off, my parents felt it best to embrace modesty. As a family, we were imbued with the ethos of keeping our heads down while taking care over our appearance and looking smart.

(Personal communication, November 20, 2015)

This theme of keeping your heads down and letting others get on with the things of importance, is one we have returned to throughout this thesis and



one that recurs in many of the conversations that I have undertaken. It followed Coogan into his working life where, as we have heard, in his early days he seemed in awe and perhaps a little resentful of the intellectual prowess and experience of the ensemble cast. Reflecting on this Coogan recognises:

I'm sure for some people this screams 'Alan Partridge subtext' and they are of course right, but it would be a while before I learned to turn my shortcomings and flaws into strengths. I wasn't liberated creatively; I had self-inflicted repression. (Coogan, 2015, p. 229)

Though I might argue that it was through his creativity that he did ultimately liberate himself, I would certainly argue that this was no 'self-inflicted' repression and not generically the 'shadow of nation' as Bhabha (2004) might suggest, but actually the 'shadow of emigration' falling across Coogan's life. The shadow both of the nation and of emigration is effectively captured by Marela Buckley (in Harte 2006) who suggests,

The tensions and belligerence in Anglo-Irish political relations make emigration to Britain a challenge with which most other destinations cannot compare. Just being an Irish person in Britain plunges Irish people there into a dramatisation of their identity because Britain has been so thoroughly and problematically involved in the construction of what we now know as Irishness and the Irish. Whenever an Irish person enters England, or when an English person enters Ireland, a hurricane of history is blowing on them. (p. 227)

With this 'hurricane of history blowing', it is no wonder that some seek shelter rather than braving the social and political, public and private elements that sought to oppress. It is also unsurprising that this mind-set was transferred to subsequent generations and at their most formative stages. This transference, established within the context of diasporic post-memory, emphasised and consolidated the contingent positioning of those 'who told the tale' and who still to a large extent saw England and the English as the oppressor and in turn influenced the next generation. In each case

contributing to an initial reluctance or a lack of confidence to speak out. As Coogan (2015) indicates,

It took me a long time to realise that I might have something interesting to say. It wasn't until I reached my thirties, in fact, that I properly began to have confidence in my own ideas. In a complete *volte-face* everything that had made me feel insecure and inadequate suddenly made me feel authentic and enlightened. (p. 165)

By his thirties, Coogan had already produced a number of establishing characters, including Duncan Thicket, Earnest Moss, Gareth Cheeseman, Paul and Pauline Calf and memorably Alan Partridge. In Partridge, self-belief becomes manifest and through the developments in the character of Partridge we perhaps see the growing confidence in Coogan. Though he subsequently attempted to move away from Partridge, seeing him more as a potential albatross to his burgeoning career ambitions, his self-confidence had grown through performance and recognition of his abilities to speak of and from his perspective becoming more assured. This realisation in fact provides part of the introduction to his autobiography, his written re-narrativisation, where he confides,

It took me a long time to find out who I was. I certainly didn't know when I was growing up. My views weren't properly formed; I used to parrot opinions that I thought sounded good. Cloistered by my Catholic upbringing in suburban Manchester. Naïve. Unsophisticated". (Coogan, 2015, p. ix)

This growing confidence allowed Coogan to explore aspects of identity in his work and there are a number of particularly clear references to Irishness and perceptions of Irishness within the Partridge series' which draw on racial and cultural stereotypes to highlight the crassness of Partridge's world view. Most obvious perhaps is the exchange between Alan Partridge and the two RTÉ executives Paul Tool and Aiden Walsh, played by Graham Linehan and Arthur

Matthews<sup>119</sup>, who have recently arrived from Dublin to discuss a possible TV project with him. This scene, from *To kill a mocking Alan*, from the first series of *I'm Alan Partridge* (Baynham et al., 1997), deserves some scrutiny as there are a number of layers of complexity both visible and invisible contained within this exchange. The complexity perhaps depends however, on how 'knowing' we believe Coogan and the team of writers to be and how 'knowing' the audience.

The character names, Paul Tool and Aiden Walsh could simply be perceived as being Irish or Irish sounding. The word, 'tool' of course is used in a number of different ways and contexts. A derogatory sense would be as a euphemism for the male appendage, equal to calling someone a 'dick' or a 'nob' for example. A 'tool' could also mean that they are very loyal but also possibly with a slightly negative undertone, that they are used to complete a task and that they therefore have little by way of self-direction or self-respect or that they have their own opinions on things. Tool as an Irish name also suggests that the owner has at some point anglicised the name and dropped the 'O' as the name would commonly have been O'Toole in its original form. Coogan spoke of such developments during our interview.

Back in the 1970s... there was the association that the Irish are, if you were, vulgar trouble-causers. That would have been the received wisdom when I was growing up, and you know there's, there's all the Irish that changed their name, dropped the 'O's from their name, tried to assimilate... having to play down their ethnicity. Irish people had to play it down in England.  
(Personal communication, November 20, 2015).

Coogan would therefore be very aware of the origination of this name, of its comedic value derived from its vulgar usage and of course is diminution as an anglicised form of the original (already anglicised) O'Toole<sup>120</sup>. As it turns out,

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<sup>119</sup> Linehan and Matthews are perhaps most well-known to British audiences for being the writers of *Father Ted*. Channel 4 TV series 1995-1998. Hatrick Productions.

<sup>120</sup> See *Oxford Dictionary of Family names in Britain and Ireland*. (Eds. Hanks, P. Coates, R. McClure, P.) 2016, p. 2015.

Paul Tool is neither a man without strong views, he is clear on Irish history for example, nor is he the butt of the joke during this exchange. Walsh is perhaps a little less layered, but nonetheless interesting in that it is a common Irish surname arising from a name given to 'outsiders'. The name originally referred to welsh speakers and/or welsh speaking immigrants to Ireland<sup>121</sup>. Aidan Walsh also evidences a keen sense of Irish history and politics and does not suffer Partridge's stereotypical, outsider views and simplistic incorrect interpretations without question. This name therefore also proves to be inappropriate.

Moving to the main exchange, Partridge, along with Lynne his PA, welcomes Paul and Aidan to the surroundings of the Linton Travel Tavern.<sup>122</sup>

Alan: I must say, I'm very grateful you've come over. Big fans of all the Irish, stuff. I love your pop music. Enya... and the other one. Ripped up the Pope. Bald chap. And I think, that's it.

Aidan: Well, there's U2, of course.

Alan: Yeah, U2. Oh, fantastic. Sunday Bloody Sunday. Really encapsulates the frustration of a Sunday. You wake up in the morning, you've got to read all the Sunday papers. The kids are running around. You've got to mow the lawn, wash the car, and you think "Sunday, bloody Sunday!"

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<sup>121</sup> See *Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland*. (Eds. Hanks, P. Coates, R. McClure, P.) 2016, p. 2827.

<sup>122</sup> For full script see <http://alanpartridgequotes.com/im-alan-partridge/series-1/episode-5-to-kill-a-mocking-alan/>

Aidan: I really hate to do this to you, Alan, but it's actually  
a song about...

Paul: Yeah. Bloody Sunday is actually about a  
massacre in Derry in 1972.

Alan: Massacre. Urgh! Not playing that again.

(Baynham et al., 1997, as cited in alanpartridgequotes.com. Retrieved  
27 April 2017)

This introductory exchange sets the tone of the conversation to come which gets more and more uncomfortable as it develops. Alongside the pain of the conversation Partridge is having with the RTÉ executives he is also engaging in an embarrassing dialogue with the Tavern staff equating them to soulless machines to match the soulless surroundings. This introductory salvo evidences Partridge's narrow range of popular cultural references, lack of empathy, inherent misogyny and racism. Ironically, Bono, when introducing the song *Sunday, Bloody Sunday* to a live audience, denied it's potentially inflammatory interpretation as either a pro or anti-rebel song by clearly stating "this song is not a rebel song"<sup>123</sup>. However it is understood, it is most certainly not a song about the frustration of having insufficient time to mow the lawn and read the paper due to the demands of a growing family in suburban Norfolk.

The conversation continues with an exchange that I was certainly familiar with growing up, that of meeting people who had never visited Ireland, in fear of its political volatility and the perceived threat of violence.

Aidan: You ever been to Ireland, Alan?

Alan: No, no. I'd love to go.

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<sup>123</sup> See U2. *Under A Blood Red Sky*. (2005) [Audio CD]. Mercury Records Ltd. (London).

Aidan: It amazes me when people say that and it's only 49 quid on a plane.

Alan: Yeah. I think that's what puts me off. Well, that's the small talk. Now let's get down to business. Now, your programme... [Irish accent] what's de big oi-dea.

At this point begins his deep-rooted stereotypical view of the Irish. Starting with what he perceives to be a good *Oirish* accent and thinking that this would endear him to the traveling Irish executives.

Paul: Well the "big oi-dea" is we want to produce a show that appeals to modern, mainstream audiences on both sides of the Irish sea...

[Alan falls into another daydream, this time he fantasizes about lap dancing for the RTE executives, who are dressed as IRA terrorists]

Alan: Ooooh! Scary Irish men! Would you like to recruit me? I like your beret's. They're worn by Saddam Hussein, Frank Spencer and the French.

[Alan snaps out of this daydream]

Paul: [Continuing] ...the culture of both countries.

Alan: I think the Irish are going through a major image change. I mean, the old image of leprechauns, shamrock, Guinness. Horses running through

council estates. Toothless simpletons. People with eyebrows on their cheeks. Badly tarmacked drives, in this country. Men in platform shoes being arrested for bombings. Lots of rocks, and Beamish. I think people are saying “Yes, there’s more to Ireland than this”. A good slogan for the tourist board [Irish accent] “There’s more to Oi-reland, DAN DIS.”.

(Baynham et al., 1997, as cited in [alanpartridgequotes.com](http://alanpartridgequotes.com).

Retrieved 27 April 2017)

As Partridge pours out these well-worn and negative descriptions of the Irish we could pause and juxtapose this with the position detailed in Coogan’s (2015) autobiography in which he remembers,

There were endless conversations in our house about the Irish being bullied by the English... I was aware of the Black and Tans when I was growing up. The way those former soldiers were sent to Ireland by the English government to assist the royal Irish constabulary was terrible. We were never to forget what murdering thugs the British had been towards the Irish. (p. 226)

In understanding Coogan’s background therefore, it becomes easier to see the knowledge base from where this list of insults was drawn. There is a legitimacy in Coogan as Partridge exploring these aspects of Irish representation through a character well known for his lack of subtlety, self-awareness, and prejudice. There are further layers of complexity here however which sees Coogan, a third-generation Irish writer, directing this anti-Irish tirade towards two first generation Irish writers (Graham Linehan and Arthur Matthews) then living in England, acting out a scene shot in England,

for a show commissioned by another first-generation Irish producer, Seamus Cassidy<sup>124</sup> for Channel 4 TV.

Partridge's lack of historical and cultural awareness and emotional intelligence continues into the next exchange in which he shows a clear disregard for *An Gorta Mor* - The Great Famine. At the very least, his lack of knowledge and insensitivity allows him to significantly misjudge what has been a major contributory factor in Ireland's difficult relationship with England over the last two centuries and further.

Alan: So, how many people were killed in the Irish famine?

Aidan: Erm. Two million, and another two million had to leave the country.

Alan: Right. If it was just the potatoes that were affected, at the end of the day, you will pay the price if you are a fussy eater.

And in just the last few exchange he perhaps sums up the attitude (albeit in comic form) of the English Establishment of the times, dismisses the deaths of two million people and casts the Irish in a belligerent and suicidal if not an almost self-genocidal light.

Partridge concludes,

Alan: If they could afford to emigrate, then they could afford to eat in a modest restaurant.

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<sup>124</sup> Born in Derry/Londonderry. For brief biography see <http://happyendings.ie/about-us/>.



(Baynham et al., 1997, as cited in alanpartridgequotes.com.

Retrieved 27 April 2017)

Thus, the sense of discomfort is complete. The sense of uncertainty, embarrassment and discomfort, here in relation to both those leaving Ireland as famine legacy or more simply as an audience for Coogan's tirade, is in how you as viewer position yourself and how you understand or interpret your position relative to others. Being appropriately placed culturally and in terms of identity to be able to fully decode the material and understand whether you belong to the 'in-group' or an 'out-group' is a key component of the satirist's armoury. As we noted previously, it doesn't matter if you 'get' the joke or not, that only extends the joke. Given the layers of complexity in this scene there are many levels of 'in' and 'out' to be considered beyond the usual in/out distinction between audience sensibilities and Partridge's common self-centred world view. Could this vignette, as we considered earlier in relation to Duncan Thicket, be a more densely and coded communication than we first thought? When I spoke with Coogan about this his response concentrated more on the issues raised through Partridge's reflection of the ignorance of many English and British people about Ireland, its landscape, politics and people than the construction of the scene itself.

It's very cathartic to play a small-minded Little Englander, castigating the Irish in, not in a mean way, in a stereotyped, if you like, ultimately sort of racist way, by caricaturing them and, and just regurgitating clichés, and which is what a lot of the British do you know.

(Personal communication, November 20, 2015)

If, as author and journalist John Savage (as cited in Campbell, 2014) identified, the 'ambivalence to the host culture... allied to a fierce pride and anger about their backgrounds', (p. 71) is an accurate reflection of second generation diasporic Irish culture in England, then it is clearly possible to identify such anger and pride in this quietly executed exchange between Partridge, Tool and Walsh, (Coogan, Linehan and Matthews). This simple exchange of ideas and 'facts' as Partridge sees them, exemplifying Coogan's view of the narrow

minded 'Little Englander' through Partridge's naïvety and ignorance. It has the additional benefit of quietly expurgating years of his, and perhaps generations of his antecedents, deeply held feelings and beliefs around the perception and treatment of the Irish in Britain. Through this simple and relatively short exchange we see Partridge representing all that Coogan despises about the small-minded bigotry of the "Little Englander" and in so doing providing the commentary on the worst excesses of Englishness. Not all of this is immediately clear on first viewing, however, suggesting once again that in identifying layers of complexity, unintentional truths are revealed rather than, in every instance, knowingly constructed, and in the quotidian manifestation of our present is revealed the complexity of our continuing pasts.

Where Terry Christian draws almost exclusively on the shared history of the second- and third-generation English-born/Irish-descent population to reflect commonly recognisable formative experiences, Coogan's characters often draw the audience in, not because they present universally or communally shared experiences, but through the experiencing of shared emotions such as uncertainty, discomfort and embarrassment. These in turn illuminate the wider human frailties of the individual. Partridge is a traditionalist "Little Englander" in a post-modern world and his struggle to keep up, reflects some of our greater individual and collective anxieties. He is a man both out of time and out of place and if, as we have posited, the displaced second generation Irish have internalized the national space and created an 'Ireland of the Soul' rather than an 'Ireland of the Soil' then we too, like Partridge, are out of time and out of place.

As though by design, Coogan's character Tony Ferrino, the Portuguese Eurovision song contest winner and star of *The Tony Ferrino experience*, (Coogan, Posner & Tyler, 1997) is also a man out of time and place. His outdated and unreconstructed views on women, his self-professed sexual prowess, and an apparently undentable self-confidence cast him in the mould of Gareth Cheeseman, another of Coogan's early creations for *Coogan's run* (Linehan, Matthews & Posner, 1995). Both of these men, and with Cheeseman a clear antecedent of Partridge, project an unreliable, mythical

and invented face to the world. Partridge, like Ferrino and Cheesman, is a character displaced and dis-temporal/anachronistic. Indeed, looking across Coogan's entire creative and 'fictional' outputs these characteristics reflect all of his characters perhaps with the exception of Pauline Calf, who is interestingly diametrically opposed. Though Pauline at times lacks self-awareness, she is a strong confident 'woman' who laughs at herself, which is something that few, if any of Coogan's other characters, have ever done. We have noted that the historical narratives of the women who made the journey from Ireland to England and beyond, remain largely untold, though we have also commented on a small number of recent exceptions which are beginning to represent and reflect on this crucial aspect of the diasporic tale. It is not so clear that a detailed study of Pauline Calf would add to this emerging and significant body of work.

Bromley (2000) argues Bhabha's position that the 'non-synchronous temporality of global and national cultures opens up a cultural space – a third space – where the negotiations of incommensurable differences create a tension peculiar to borderline existences' (p. 7).<sup>125</sup> Whilst the development of these anachronistic characters does not fix Coogan in terms of his identity, and as we have seen he has a relatively fluid or dynamic approach based on a sense of social and societal 'justice', it perhaps contributes to his shifting contingent positionality.

In 2013, the journalist Paul Barkham discussed the making of *Alpha papa* (Baynham et al., 2013), the Alan Partridge feature film then in production, with Coogan. Coogan's final remarks reflect the complexity of the overlap between himself and Alan Partridge and presumably many of his other characters:

It's recognising your own vanities and insecurities and turning the volume up on them. Anyone who is creative puts something of themselves in what they do, and I've put lots in, but it's the warped, prejudicial side of myself. It's not just a mocking caricature. It has to have some degree of humanity. On one

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<sup>125</sup> Bhabha, 2004, p. 218.

level, Alan is very likable because he makes mistakes and vocalises a lot of the insecurities that people feel. He's also a contemptuous Little Englander, the kind of person who I see as my life to rail against. Part of him is everything I hate about Britain. It's a bit complicated. (para 21).

Whilst this neatly wraps up Partridge as a fabrication incorporating aspects of Coogan's own persona, it asks questions too of the less obviously contrived 'characterisations of self' presented in such undertakings as *The trip* (Winterbottom, 2010a). *Coffee and Cigarettes* (Jarmusch 2003), and *The life and times of Tristram Shandy: A cock and bull story* (Winterbottom, 2005) – the second 'phase' of Coogan's corpus that I briefly intend to consider. Interviewed in 2010 by John Wilson for Radio 4's *Front Row* programme, about the making of *The life and times of Tristram Shandy: A cock and bull story* which saw Coogan and Rob Brydon playing exaggerated versions of themselves, Coogan says, "I think it a bit, then crank it up as if it matters to me... they are distortions of what we think". (as Cited in Cottrell-Boyce 2015. 01:54:00). This idea of 'turning the volume up' or 'cranking up' the reality of an idea or a performance, formed part of the wider interview with Cottrell-Boyce. Coogan indicating,

In any piece of honest acting there has to be a kernel of truth in that, Rob and I trust each other and know each other enough to know we can press each other's buttons and use personality traits as grist to the mill... it's important for people to realise that it's not reality television. (Cottrell-Boyce, 2015, 01:01:00)

However, certainly to a greater extent than some scripted reality shows, *The Only Way is Essex*, *Geordie Shore*, *Desperate Scousewives*, for example, this might be closer to reality TV than we might first assume. Not necessarily in the sense that reality is being depicted, but that through its unscripted narrative, reality accidentally emerges.

Whilst outputs such as *A cock and bull story* and *The trip* may reveal much about the character and personality of Coogan they offer few direct references to Coogan's Irish upbringing. It is as early as the first episode, *Inn at Whitewell*, of the loosely scripted series *The trip* (Winterbottom, 2010b)

however, that a discussion about Coogan's reluctance to share a hotel room and the double bed with Rob Brydon reveals that Coogan was an altar boy. When Brydon asks why Coogan would not share a bed with him the following dialogue emerges.

Brydon:       What's the problem anyway? What do you think's  
going to happen

Coogan:       You might touch my bottom

Brydon:       Oh right. Were you an Altar boy?

Coogan        Yes I was

Brydon:       Seriously? Well I'll go on the sofa if you want...  
Sorry I didn't realise we were into Oprah Winfrey  
territory. Are you seriously saying you were  
abused as a child as an altar boy?

Coogan:       Only verbally and physically but not sexually – just  
punched... by the priest

(Winterbottom, 2010b).

Whilst this is possibly no more than a childish and regressive response both to Coogan's assumed attractiveness to Brydon and the 'threat' therefore of unwanted sexual attention, it plays again on the balance of power between the two actors. Additionally, it takes a sideswipe at the Catholic Church which at the end of 2010 (when the first episode of *The trip* was aired in the UK) was on the receiving end of an unprecedented number of accusations of child abuse and had already undertaken a decade of self-reflection and investigation. Accusations of physical and verbal abuse aside there appears to be some biographical detail included in this exchange. At many points at which you may decide to make an incision in Coogan's work you begin to detect the tensions between the real and the fabrication and aspects of the truth are used as a mask which further complicates an accurate reading of

either. Adding further complexity to the multiple layers of presentation and representation in a reading of *The trip* is the inclusion in the narrative of the on-going competition between Coogan and Brydon to see who is the better impersonator. Both are excellent vocal mimics and throughout the upper hand is sought in terms of who can best represent someone else. For Coogan, the series knowingly, one presumes, uses the struggle to be someone else as a proxy measure for the struggle to be happy with himself. Coogan speaks to us of his own perceived inadequacies and failures often through being someone else and through someone else's voice, reaching its poignant apotheosis in his recurring failed attempts to be the best at pretending to be a small man trapped in a box.

In a 2011 IndieWire<sup>126</sup> review of the film version of *The Trip* released in 2011, Eric Kohn observes,

The reality is that everything in '*The Trip*' offers itself up as a metaphor, including the title, which reflects the soul-searching nature of Coogan's mindset. More than that, those ubiquitous impressions take on a symbolic dimension as well, becoming a literal manifestation of the identity crisis plaguing Coogan in virtually every scene. (Kohn, 2011)

The process of becoming is clearly foregrounded on many levels in this series in an atmosphere of bleak, comic, melancholy.

In discussing his approach to the vignettes contained within his 2003 film *Coffee and Cigarettes*, (Jarmusch, 2003) Jarmusch reveals,

I have a script for each one, but usually, the evening before, I get to play with the actors or have one little rehearsal. During the shoot, I often try to trick them by telling them, 'On this next take, we're just going to go up to here in the script.' Then, after they get there, I'd keep rolling and leave them stranded and see what they would do. Sometimes that gets incorporated. With Steve Coogan and Alfred Molina, the basic skeleton of the script is still in the finished film, but the dialogue they brought into the

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<sup>126</sup> On line News, networking and information site for Independent film makers.

rehearsal.... They were just flying. I was having trouble writing it all down and then sifting through which things to keep and which variations I preferred” (Tobias, 2004).

Coogan brings his Irish heritage clearly into the dialogue between himself and Alfred Molina as the two-hander with Molina is about family ties. Molina is trying, desperately at times, to get Coogan to understand and accept that they are cousins. Coogan knows in reality, and says in the film, that his ancestors are Irish, whether or not there is an actual Italian connection that is the basis for the exchange is unknown. It is unclear from Jarmusch’s description of the process whether this exchange relating to his Irish ancestry is ad-libbed or directly from the script. In either case, there is a recognition of the differing and likely cultural backgrounds of the two actors Molina and Coogan and they both play on this throughout. What is interesting is Coogan’s continuation of the comedy of discomfort through into this particular and high profile ‘art house’ project. Interesting also to note that Jarmusch (and one might surmise that the exchange was originally scripted by Jarmusch and then developed and extemporised on by Molina and Coogan) and Coogan were very relaxed about introducing accurate personal details about his private life into a semi-fictional film. Though the film had limited release around the globe it was a clear embarkation point for Coogan’s aspirant journey into American mainstream cinema.

This might not be the first time Coogan deliberately introduced personal information and experiences from his more unscripted ‘real’ life off screen but it began a series of programmes and films which used adaptations of Coogan’s own life. *The Life and Times of Tristram Shandy: A Cock and Bull Story* (Winterbottom, 2005), a forerunner of *The Trip*, certainly provides evidence of this chronology in the exchange at the end of the film between Brydon and Coogan as they sit in the make-up room discussing their next projects. It is certainly no coincidence therefore, that Michael Winterbottom<sup>127</sup>, who directed

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<sup>127</sup> Winterbottom and Coogan first met on the set of *24 Hour Party People*, Winterbottom’s film about Anthony H. Wilson, Factory Records and the Manchester Music scene.

*A Cock and Bull Story*, also instigated and directed two series of *The Trip* (2010 and 2014 respectively).

As if the layers of complexity apparent in *The trip* were not enough for Coogan, *The life and times of Tristram Shandy: A cock and bull story* (2005) is a film about the attempt to make a film based on Laurence Sterne's book, *The life and times of Tristram Shandy*. The film explores the production process behind and in front of the camera in an attempt to show the difficulties inherent in shooting such a complex narrative. In another layer of complexity, Coogan recreates aspects of his personal experiences on screen, whilst pretending to be Steve Coogan the actor, who is also playing the role of Tristram Shandy. If Peter Seller's biography *The mask behind the mask* (Evans, 1981) attempted to peel away a layer only to find another layer beneath, then *A cock and bull story* similarly reveals and obfuscates in equal measure. During an interview included in Cottrell-Boyce's (2015) radio documentary, *Knowing Steve: Knowing you*, Michael Winterbottom says of Coogan's approach to their work,

It is incredibly rare to find someone that holds your attention that is funny, that you like, that is interesting, that is complicated that is willing to explore and reveal the kind of darker sides of their character - their faults, their weaknesses as well as their strengths and Steve's great at that, he's incredibly honest and open and just really fun to work with. (Cottrell-Boyce, 2015. 02:34:38).

In recreating a number of personal experiences and intertwining them with the 'fictional' narrative on screen, there is a sense here both of a narcissistic pleasure in 'outing' himself, (predating his involvement as a victim of the phone tapping scandal) and perhaps 'hiding in plain sight', where the blurring of lines between the fact, the fiction and the fictionalised both draws attention to and deflects attention from any ability to clearly locate a particular truth. Simultaneously, the widely-publicised aspects of his life included in the narrative of *A cock and bull story*, serve both to disempower the tabloid press who may seek to make headlines and therefore money from the worst



excesses of his behaviour by leaving them no secrets to uncover whilst for other viewers, blurring the lines between fact and fiction.

Turning to the third 'phase' of Coogan's output which draws directly on his relationship with Ireland and the Irish, I will consider two facets of his work. First, his own direct portrayal of Irish-born characters and second his co-written portrayal of the character *Philomena* and the informed narrative of the eponymous film.

When I spoke with Coogan we discussed his involvement in Baby Cow's production of *Moone Boy* (Murphy & O'Dowd, 2012) and of him taking on the role of Francie 'Touchy' Feeley in Episode 2 of the first series. Ironically perhaps, the Irish-born characters that Coogan plays are in many ways less revealing about him than his other creations beyond the obvious delight he takes in playing the role:

Well, I was glad when *Moone Boy*, they asked me to do [it]. I was chomping at the bit thinking I can finally do my Mayo accent that I've hitherto not been able to use. I just thought a useless tool in your box, you know, you've never used, I thought oh great, I can finally do the accent and there are amazing characters there.

(Personal communication, November 20, 2015)

A small plea for the recognition of his authenticity is perhaps evident here, but certainly a confident statement of positionality which underpins and legitimises his work and a personal recognition that it is important to remember where you have come from. Revisiting and remembering is a key part of the process of realisation but also a measure of how far you have come and a recognition that the process of self-realisation is continuous. If in this case neither the character of Touchy Feeley nor my interview appeared to reveal much of significance about Coogan beyond his obvious delight in utilising his vocal talents to bring the character to life, then there was certainly more to be gained from looking some accompanying footage shot by Baby Cow Producer Ted Dowd. In this short film, *Moone Boy: The Coogan Connection*, (Dowd, 2012) Dowd sets out to interview Steve Coogan about the character of Touchy

Feeley but Coogan adopts another unnamed character through which to speak. The character is that of an Irish man, for whom this is his first acting job, and who for the most part runs a farm just outside the town of Castlebar in the West of Ireland. He is characterised as an introverted, shy middle-aged man, who speaks quickly and quietly, very self-deprecating and a little lacking confidence and who rarely if ever makes direct eye contact with Dowd (the interviewer) speaking largely with his eyes closed.<sup>128</sup> Speaking of his character through this character Coogan says, “His name is Touchy Feeley, Francie Feeley is his name, and I, I, I play him, a little more confident than what I am in real life. That’s for sure”. His mannerisms appear well observed, the nods of the head and the reserved and unassuming, self-deprecating approach reflecting the characteristics of many older Irish, reminiscent of Paul Whitehouse’s character Ted from the *Fast Show*<sup>129</sup>. Whether this is a representation of the Irish he has observed in Ireland or in England is of course not clear. The accent appears perfect and is commented on as such by a number of below the line comments (viewer comments beneath the uploaded video<sup>130</sup>) which also attribute this to his Irish heritage. Others again make the mistake that his parents are both Irish born rather than English born:

Totally convincing would not even question this accent - castlebar gets a mention in there too - love steve coogan (Wulfstirfrie21, 2013)

His parents are Irish, that would explain the ace accent. (like2surf, 2013)

brilliant, Coogan pulls another blinder. (VC1, 2013)

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<sup>128</sup> Dowd explained via email that Coogan had always planned to deliver the interview in this way. “Steve knew he’d do it that way when he read it. He also did the Irish farmer on Mid-Morning Matters series 1. Learnt the voice from many family holidays as a kid”. (Personal communication 18.03.16).

<sup>129</sup> Linehan and Mathews wrote the characters Ted (Paul Whitehouse) and Ralph (Charlie Higson) into a continuing love story for the series *The Fast Show*. BBC TV (1994-2000).

<sup>130</sup> Below the line comments sourced on the date of retrieval. See *The Steve Coogan Connection – Moone Boy*. (retrieved 18.03.16).  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pJNGfUYMJNY>

Ah Jaysus lads that's as good as real... (briani4735263, 2013)

this is actually spot on, thats savage! (Pwn Logan, 2013)

Absolutely spot on!! (Matthew O'Hare, 2014)

(Retrieved (18.03.16) from  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pJNGfUYMJNY>)

None of the comments/commentators however, claim Coogan as Irish *per se* however, 'Theeggtimer tic tic' (2013), in a reversal of the comment levelled at Pierce Brosnan who actually is Irish<sup>131</sup>, acknowledges Coogan's excellent impressions. 'Be Jaysus that Irish fella is quaren (*sic*) good at doin the posh English accent! ;)'. Seemingly, despite the potential to be labelled as a Plastic Paddy, it is better to be born in England and show knowledge and affinity with Ireland than to actually be born in Ireland and take on affectations of the English.

Later comments pick up the thread,

Not surprising. After all Steve is of Irish descent. (Peadar Ó Croidheáin, 2014)

Baby cow. Steve's characters are always heart felt (Bob Loblaw, 2014)

Coogan has Irish blood (MahlerThird, 2014)

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<sup>131</sup> On Brosnan, his Irishness was humourously (some might say scathingly) questioned in a 2004 Irish Times review of his then recently released film *Laws of Attraction*. The review begins, "Jesus, Mary and Joseph, will ye look who it is. It's that James Bond Fella, so it is, so it is. No not him, the other one - the English lad who thinks he's from Naas or Newbridge or wherever" (Barton, R. (2009). *The Voice of Pierce Brosnan. Affecting Irishness. Negotiating cultural identity within and beyond the nation. Reimagining Ireland.* (Vol 2. p. 269).

(Retrieved (18.03.16) from  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pJNGfUYMJNY>)

He also references a pub called The Punchbowl as a place he still goes for a pint with the local men who encouraged him to go into acting.

The below the line comments reflect this insider knowledge:

The Punch Bowl is a pub in Ballyhane, just outside Castlebar.  
He had his homework done (dbasq1, 2014)

Excellent! "Alright I'll be in touch" \*Bang! Ireland in a nutshell. (Claire Walshe, 2014)

how brilliant is Coogan?!? improv for the camera, right off the cuff. (Bradaighbunch, 2015)

Of course he has Irish connections. (BuddhaBoy, 2015)

His Irish accent is incredible and his intonations and his knowledge. Castlebar, haha. Just genius. (BuddhaBoy, 2015)

(Retrieved (18.03.16) from  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pJNGfUYMJNY>)

Adopting the character of a part-time actor/farmer to play the character of Feeley draws upon real places (The Punchbowl outside Castlebar) to illuminate and validate this characterisation. It is both the accuracy of the accent and the local geographical knowledge that gain acceptance for him amongst the presumably Irish commentators. In firstly agreeing to take part in this research and then in the course of our conversation, Coogan evidences his clear knowledge of Irish history, culture, geography and politics and reinforces and restates his claim to an Irish identity. The positive responses to his accent and geographical knowledge are not taken as evidence of a 'wanna

be' Irishman or a Plastic Paddy but as evidence of his legitimacy to portray the Irish and portray them in this way. These commentators at least respect his knowledge and affinity with Ireland and particularly the West of Ireland, and accept him as simply of Irish descent but importantly as a result, with a right to comment and portray accurately both the land and its people.

Coogan's (2015) autobiography similarly seeks to align him with the land and the people of Ireland. We see relatively lengthy passages given over to his reminiscence of childhood experiences in Ireland, the sights, sounds and smells of the place, and what it meant to him then and now. Perhaps even when it is unnecessary to do so he uses direct reference to Irish literary sources to illuminate the narrative. "You won't find any grief porn in this book. It isn't Angela's Ashes" (p. x) he says in the introduction to his autobiography, referencing Frank McCourt's 1996 memoir in which McCourt presented stories of his impoverished childhood growing up in Ireland and Brooklyn. He uses this reference in three ways I suggest, firstly to draw attention to his Irish connections and to make connections with Irish readers and readers of Irish descent; secondly to make a literary connection at once indicating his own wider reading and recognise that of others, (perhaps reflecting his earlier lack of confidence when working alongside his Oxbridge colleagues); thirdly, and in contrast to the first two, to distance himself from this impoverished, over sentimentalised, almost mythical story of hardship and toil contained within McCourt's memoir and instead recognise his 'strong, secure and loving, lower middle-class background that is not celebrated enough' (p. x). He concludes, that although he intends to be open and honest in his writing, and that he has not been a "paragon of virtue" nor has he "always been honourable", he is not expecting or asking for pity:

It is my work that I have offered up for judgement not my personal life.  
I'm proud of my work, and if the people don't like it, then I've failed.  
Judge me on the work, not the cocaine and the strippers. (p. x).

And with this sentence we are taken (almost) into the realms of 'grief porn' that he appeared so keen to avoid.

*Steve Coogan: The Inside Story* (Coogan et al., 2009) is a 'mockumentary' of Coogan's career. Starring a range of well-known and respected comedy performers including Jim Moir and Bob Mortimer, (*Vic and Bob*) Ronnie Ancona (*The Sketch Show*), Julia Davis (*Nighty Night*), and presented by Mark Williams (*The Fast Show*) amongst others. Coogan plays a number of characters in the programme one being the role of his Aunty Peggy, who spends her time on screen with her friend Margaret (Julia Davis), folding washing in the wash room of a house. The mockumentary is an uneasy mix of the real, in terms of career chronology and the use of archive footage of his performances, and the surreal, as character after character introduces strange and spurious information about his past. His 'Aunt Peggy' played as a working class Irish character, still presumably living in Ireland, and dressed in an old-fashioned flower patterned overall (as is her sidekick Margaret played by Julia Davis) covered with a light blue cardigan. She has tightly permed dyed blond hair, and cheap-rimmed spectacles and stands stooped and nervous. She speaks, as did the 'actor' playing Touchy Feeley, quickly so that you have to 'lock in' to follow the banality of her narrative about Coogan as a child. She continues this blend of the real and surreal as she talks about Coogan's childhood visits to Ireland, stuttering through a particularly mundane story about a black and white cat he used to play with in the yard before indicating that even then "he was forever with the voices", meaning that he was always doing impressions. The accent is very pronounced and seems even stronger in the second Aunty Peggy and Margaret insert. The thickness and richness of the voice further emphasised by the pronunciation of some words glottally delivered from deep in the throat. This representation both of Irishness, and an older generation of Irish women is born of experience and fondness. Interviewed in 2013 for RTÉ's *The Works*, John Kelly asks Coogan (though in relation to his film *Philomena*) about this experience and "to what extent was this film a kind of tribute to those women, who are often overlooked and underestimated?" Coogan responds:

It was, because it's often very easy to mock slightly eccentric older Irish women, of which there are many, but do that thing

where you gently mock and appear to laugh at but then surprise the audience by realising that there's more to her than initially meets the eye. (Kelly 2013. 02:48).

Whether this is in the context of *Philomena*, which we will discuss in some detail later, or in the case of his more comedic 'Aunt Peggy', the issue is still the same, as Aunt Peggy indicates:

Aunt Peggy: I don't like it when he dresses as a lady, I don't like it when he dresses as a lady. The characters he does are fine funny characters and they're grand, they're grand, but I don't like it when he dresses as a lady because he has to pretend to have a vagina, I don't like that. (Coogan et al., 2009)

He not only reveals that there is more to the character than initially "meets the eye" (Kelly, 2013. 02:48), an approach he used in relation to the character of *Philomena*, but that here is the straight talking Irish mother/grandmother many of us will be familiar with. One who speaks their mind with ease, without care of upsetting anyone and with the ability, (reminiscent of Catherine Tate's character Nan), to shock at will through her direct language and often unreconstructed views. All juxtaposed with the expectation of the audience that they are watching a gentle older lady, perhaps out of step with modern life and the reality of the times. Later in the mockumentary we again return to the two ladies who this time are reluctant to say the word 'bottom' when talking about Coogan's 'behind', and in their embarrassment (though not evident when discussing vaginas) the accent and delivery dissolves into one closer to his unconfident actor/farmer character discussed above. It would be possible of course to view the portrayal of these two working class ladies in a number of ways. To begin with at least, they are fairly undermining characterisations. The uncomfortable way in which Coogan holds himself, stooped and with one

arm seemingly inactive, emphasises their unease at being the centre of attention and inexperience in front of camera. Their choice of garb emphasises their working-class status and hints at a generational approach to the place and appearance of women in a domestic situation. The delivery of the lines is stilted and stuttering and interrupts the flow of the narrative which when it finally emerges is very mundane. In sum, this is quite a negative portrayal of the Irish and Irish womanhood in particular. The second appearance allows them to build in confidence and express ideas and opinions more forcefully and confidently in contrast to their earlier portrayal but still situates them in opposition to Coogan's portrayal of the other strong woman in his life, Pauline Calf.

To conclude this mockumentary the narrative returns to two characters that have appeared sporadically throughout the film. Both blend the real with the surreal and both characters are played by Coogan himself. They provide a very self-deprecating, honest and perhaps dissatisfied appraisal of where his career currently lies and its possible future. The character of Mickey Gold, Coogan's fictional first agent, sums up by saying, "Steve is now in Hollywood. He is living every British comedian's dream, playing small parts in big movies. And it doesn't get much better than that". (Coogan et al., 2009). He then looks to the sky to show a lack of conviction in his last statement. This is perhaps how Coogan viewed his career at that time, and through the comedy is revealed the tragedy of his situation as he sees it. Through the mask of Mickey Gold, a version of the truth is revealed. This is followed immediately by the last interjection from his Aunt Peggy who prophetically decides,

Aunt Peggy: He's such a funny fella, the funny characters is  
only the half of what he is capable of. And I think  
for the future we're going to see a lot more of him,  
more mature work, with, with, with, multi layered,  
I think that's right.

(Coogan et al., 2009)



Again, from behind the mask of Auntie Peggy drawing on aspects of his family background, is revealed the truth about Coogan that he has often revealed about himself. He wants to be known for more than being an impersonator and for more than being a comedian. He may indeed prove to be “a serious person” who just likes “to do funny things” (Coogan, 2015, p. 85).

Reviewing the final few minutes of the mockumentary, it is interesting to note that he reserves the negative summation of his career, and that which perhaps captures his own dissatisfaction with his current status and his lack of acceptance as a serious artist, writer/performer, to the relaxed and confident middle-class English tones of the character Mickey Gold, whilst the clear and contradictory statement of a more positive future is given to the ‘Irish’ family member to conceptualize. Auntie Peggy voicing for Coogan what may well be a very succinct, prescient and honest appraisal of his work and his unfulfilled career aspirations up to that point. That the character of Auntie Peggy could be viewed as derogatory to that generation of Irish women is potentially problematic not to say ironic given the respect he shows for that generation when talking about his portrayal of *Philomena*. What Coogan does however, is imbue them with the most insightful commentary on his talent and future prospects, capturing a significant truth about his aspirations and skill. It is also important to note that he chose to introduce, in amongst all of these other more fictional characters and memories, an element of truth into his life story in the shape of his Irish ancestors. The observations captured in these characters, their mannerisms and delivery are easily recognisable to an Irish audience or one of Irish descent and he reveals his Irishness to an audience capable of decoding these signs. That he has witnessed these accents and mannerisms over a long period of time adds a layer of familiarity to the performance and no doubt forms an additional bridge between Coogan and many of his more knowing audience. Colleary (2015) suggests when discussing the stand-up comedy performance of Irish comedian Maeve Higgins:

Higgins recounting of her youth, fixed in place, time and language, does emphasise that sense of cultural belonging with

the audience. Her material lays a strong emphasis on the minutiae of her personal life, grounded in honesty and also a desire to tell the truth of her experiences however they are transposed into the performative arena. (p. 140)

That Coogan may not always be telling us all of the truth all of the time in this mockumentary is clear, but where he is telling the truth may be clearer to some of the people some of the time. This particular representation of his childhood experiences, heightened for the camera and for comic effect, is, unlikely as it may seem, grounded in honesty and certainly appears to tell some truth. As such, place and time and language solidifies the invisible code of understanding between the performer and the audience even within this pre-recorded and exaggerated programme format. This blending of the surreal and the hyper-real, the latter grounded in truth, is explored by Colleary and through this juxtaposition of the real, the hyper real, the surreal and the unreal (i.e. untrue) Coogan reflects Colleary's (2015) discussion:

The American comedian Jerry Seinfeld has stated that the gift of the comic is a sense of detachment, which feels Brechtian and allows the comic to view everyday situations from an ironic distance. What Seinfeld terms the 'third eye' is that critical distance essential when mining everyday experiences for the purposes of laughter. Clearly both the manipulation of material and an attitude of detachment are central components underlying the creation of comic material. (p. 51)

The detachment from the Irish gives Coogan the necessary insight to portray the character of Aunty Peggy as a grotesque, yet his proximity to it and intimacy with it offers the character as a distortion of the truth rather than another pure fabrication and the portrayal provides some congruity and familiarity for the knowing audience. We should similarly consider the character of Alan Partridge through the intimacy and distance Coogan has with and from England and the English. Colleary (2015) recounts Richard Prior's response, when asked about his approach to writing: "Truthful, always truthful... and funny will come" (p. 51). In the context of Coogan's mockumentary, *The Inside Story*, and perhaps his entire comic repertoire, the opposite might also, it seems, be true. Funny always funny... and the truth will come. The intimacy and distance of Chapter 4 is reflected in Colleary's (2015)

argument that central to the creation of comic material lies “both the manipulation of material and an attitude of detachment” (p. 51). I would argue that for it to be successful both must derive from a familiarity with the source material. It is after all merely an attitude of detachment, the pretence of a physical, intellectual or spiritual distancing not an actual absence of understanding or empirical engagement that enables a performer to connect with an audience.

The familiarity with the material and the ability to manipulate it may derive as much from estrangement as engagement at the moment it is crafted but there will always be, or should always have been, familiarity, understanding and attachment for it to connect. As we move to consider the film adaptation of Martin Sixsmith’s book, *The Lost Child of Philomena Lee*, (Sixsmith, 2010), we might reflect that herein lies the key strength of his work. Like looking at a work of ‘art’ its power lies not in what that artist was necessarily trying to convey but in what it says to or asks of the viewer. Coogan, as the generative site of his own identity, and representing an interstitial positionality through this life and work, allows both intimacy and distance to imbue his characters and stories with familiarity, truth and value. And this is perhaps most clearly visible in his interpretation of Philomena’s story for the screen. At the age of 48, Coogan’s 2013 film release *Philomena* (Coogan & Pope, 2013) perhaps begins to most effectively and obviously capture the essence of Steve Coogan. In an elegantly paced, if unorthodox ‘road movie/buddy movie’ and detective story, Steve Coogan and Judy Dench present the story of an older Irish lady, living in England for over five decades, searching for the son that was taken from her by the nuns at a convent school for teenage mothers in 1950s Ireland. Incidentally, Judi Dench, who portrays Philomena in this film adaptation, is of Irish descent, her Mother being from Dublin and her Father though born in England was raised in Ireland, which perhaps brings a further degree of sensitivity and understanding to the role of Philomena.

Coogan (2015) describes his attraction to Philomena’s story: “Beyond the obvious dramatic tension, it [Philomena] had a very personal resonance for me. I had been brought up in a Catholic family and spent summer holidays

with extended family in Ireland...” (pp. 17-18). This personal resonance is picked up later as he describes how his background and cultural experiences helped inform his writing of the character Philomena for the screen:

I realised that in the case of Philomena, my background might actually help me. Also, liberal-leaning intellectuals might worry about castigating the simple worldview of an old Irish lady. It wasn't a concern for me. I grew up knowing lots of old Irish ladies and I can say with some authority that they do say lots of daft things. I knew I could mine comedy from playing with Philomena's character and then dignifying the grace and serenity of that same woman. You can mock the things you love”. (p. 17-18).

Coogan evidences the warmth of his feelings towards 'Irishness', in particular through his reflections about 'old Irish ladies' that he has known whilst using his proximal relationship to Ireland as an enabling device for both comedy and pathos. It is easy to sense a striving for authenticity through this claim to both know and love aspects of 'Irishness' through being of similar stock. During our interview, he confirms and compounds this extract from his autobiography when I told Coogan that there was something in the character that I really recognised, that I could see my Grandma clearly coming through the character portrayal of Philomena, and asked how close his representation of Philomena was to the real Philomena:

Philomena is based on the real Philomena but it's also... I felt comfortable writing it because I know lots of Irish ladies of that generation my mother being one, but when I was growing up in Ireland meeting lots of aunties who were like that and I didn't feel at all uncomfortable at laughing at Irish women, because we do laugh at people we love.  
(Personal communication, November 20, 2015)

Perhaps this is reflected in his troubling characterisation of his fictional Aunt Peggy in his earlier Mockumentary. He continues,

It doesn't surprise me what you say about her seeming like your grandmother. So many people I bumped into said she's just like my Mum, she's just like my grandmother, so many people say that, and I can't tell you how that gladdened me... So although

it's definitely Philomena it's bits and bobs of other Irish ladies I've known.

(Personal communication, November 20, 2015)

Despite the fact that she was, as we discovered, born in England, Coogan classifies his mother along with other 'Irish ladies' of a certain generation. As we learned that she was sent back to Ireland to live with her parent's family for a number of years during the war, Coogan believes this gives her a closer tie to Ireland than merely being born in England of Irish parents and therefore a more 'authentic' version of Irishness on which to base his claim to knowledge and influence in developing the character of Philomena. This sense he sees as legitimatising his ability to laugh at the older Irish generation. Whether he succeeds or not may lie with the audience and their ability to recognise either a diasporic Irishness or a view of Ireland from a diasporic perspective. That the real Philomena travelled the recognisable road from rural Ireland to urban England and to become a nurse not only gives her a recognisable diasporic identity, separated from the patriarchal and Church-led, sexually repressed Ireland of the 1950s, but also allows us to view Coogan's characterisation of her both as and from the diaspora.

It is important to recognise Philomena, both real and as represented on screen, as being a diasporic life. Coogan describes his ability to understand, not necessarily the Ireland that is portrayed in this film alone, but the impact of Ireland on the diasporic working class figure of Philomena:

I've got an affinity with it and there's a familiarity to it, to the Irish, that I find very comforting. If I hear an Irish accent I feel like that's a friend instinctively. Even though I might be wrong but *[laughs]*... But there's something I find reassuring about it, it feels very, familiar, literally, to me.

(Personal communication, November 20, 2015)

This 'affinity' is an empirical, embodied and shared history and empathy with the Irish through his social, cultural and political education at home and his engagement with extended family through family holidays in Ireland. This embodied history and culture may be lightly worn as familiarity but Coogan

indicates it is this that allows him the confidence to speak through so many different characters, contemptuously and mockingly and lovingly.

The mocking of things that you love however does not extend to the Catholic Church and the film perhaps also allows Coogan as Sixsmith to play out his own frustrations with both the Catholic Church and the older generation's blind faith and acceptance of doctrine and dogma. During our interview Coogan expands on the relationship between himself and the subject on screen:

*Philomena*, the film, is really... is me having an internal discussion about Irishness and Catholicism. Through writing that film, [it] has allowed me to air my views, even though it's a true story. I took the vehicle of *Philomena* to say some things as Martin Sixsmith, about religious oppression, about how stifling that can be. And part of the Irish diaspora... the reason it continues was because young people felt disenfranchised from their country by a kind of patriarchal church that said, if you like, we'll decide what's good for you... there was this sexual repression coupled with this philanthropic idea of helping people. You can help as many people as you like; just don't have sex with them *[laughs]*.

(Personal communication, November 20, 2015)

To enable his views to emerge clearly on screen Coogan rewrote Martin Sixsmith as a Catholic and Kelly (2013) introduces this topic when interviewing Coogan about the differences between the characters and other points of intersection being the basis for both comedy and pathos:

Kelly: One of the things that does link them, (*Philomena* and Sixsmith) is that they're both Catholic, the Sixsmith figure is long lapsed and she is an Irish Catholic woman in England of long-standing, that sets up comedy but it also sets up a really interesting way of discussing what religion and faith actually is.

SC: ... there's a lot of artistic license, Martin in actual fact isn't a catholic at all, I invented that, because I'm a Catholic, and of course I wrote it so I put a lot of myself into it and I wanted

to have that discussion on screen. It's a discussion I have in my head quite a lot. (Kelly, 2013. 01:32).

A scene in the film, sees Philomena and Sixsmith on the car journey to Sean Ross Abbey in Roscrea to meet with the nuns who were at the heart of Philomena's childhood story. The relationship between Philomena and Sixsmith is still very much at an early stage and their strained conversation introduces a clear dichotomy between the characters. This division remains throughout despite Sixsmith's growing understanding through the film of the value of faith to others. It also includes reference to Coogan's own life when he admits again to having being an altar boy:

Philomena: Ooh,  
(Hangs a St. Christopher medal on the rear-view mirror).  
That's for good luck.

Sixsmith: (Raising his eyes in slight disbelief and dismissal)  
I've always thought Saint Christopher to be a bit of a Mickey Mouse saint.

(Cutaway of Philomena, saying nothing but casting a glance his way).

I used to be an altar boy.

Philomena: Do you believe in God Martin?

Sixsmith: Ah... well... where do you start? I've always thought that was a very difficult question, to er... give a simple answer to. Do you?

Philomena: (responding immediately)... Yes

Sixsmith: (Gives wry smile to himself, and emits a single quiet but audible laugh).

(Coogan & Pope, 2013)

Through this simple exchange, Coogan presents the gulf between Sixsmith and Philomena in terms of religious belief capturing a real aspect of second and third-generation experience. A huge chasm exists between the strength of belief of one who has born so much that might be thought to challenge the strongest of faiths and one who has, through class, culture and middle-class entitlement, been able to make more informed choices with fewer unmanageable consequences. Philomena's clear and simple response to the question, seemingly without judging the questioner, has the ability through its solemnity, finality, simplicity and strength, to silence the inquisitor and end the conversation.

One of the silences of the film that needs to be broken is that of the nuns, and by proxy the Church itself, who have conspired over the decades to keep the truth from those they have been purporting to help. Coogan expanded on his portrayal of the nuns during our interview:

With regard to the nuns, I didn't want them to be portrayed in a caricatured way and I'm pleased to say I don't think that happened. Even though some of the things they did and said might appear to be over the top to a modern-day audience or audiences that aren't in the know, in actual fact if we'd been truthful they would have behaved even worse.  
(Personal communication, November 20, 2015)

This sense of audiences being 'in the know' is crucial to our understanding of, and response to, Coogan as an Irish writer and performer. No doubt there are universal themes explored within the film (love, loss, guilt, despair, arrival and departure) but these are framed within the context of a diasporic Irish Catholic life in England. A world that Coogan knows, a world he has experienced first-hand and a world which he thinks many of his audience will also understand.



After visiting the abbey, Sixsmith and Philomena have a conversation standing in the countryside, surrounded by an archetypal green landscape worthy of John Ford, Jim Sheridan or Ken Loach<sup>132</sup> and continue their religious oppositionality:

Sixsmith: It's funny isn't it, all the pieces of paper designed to help you find him [her son] have been destroyed, but guess what, the one piece of paper designed to stop you finding him has been lovingly preserved. God in his infinite wisdom decide to spare that from the flames.

Philomena: I signed it because I believed I had committed a terrible sin and then had to be punished. But what made it so much worse was that I enjoyed it.

Sixsmith: What?

Philomena: The sex. Ahh, it was wonderful Martin, I thought I was floating on air. He was so handsome, the way he held me in his arms. The thing is, I didn't even know I had a clitoris Martin.

Sixsmith: (shuffling slightly nervously)... Right

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<sup>132</sup> John Ford (The Quiet Man, 1952), Jim Sheridan (The Field, 1990), Ken Loach (The Wind that Shakes the Barley, 2006)

Philomena:           And after the sex was over I thought that  
  anything that feels so lovely must be  
  wrong.

Sixsmith:           (shaking his head)... Fucking Catholics.

(Coogan & Pope, 2013).

Again, we see here, that there is more to Philomena than first meets the eye and that although she may present as a quiet and unassuming woman (one who keeps has kept her head down and her mouth shut) she has opinions and feelings that she is not afraid to share, some of which this journey has allowed her to share openly for the first time. Though their journey does not change either of the characters fundamentally, they both experience a sense of liberation; Philomena from the oppression and guilt she has lived with for all of her adult life, and Sixsmith from his own uptight English preconceptions and prejudices. Despite the religious background to the story, there is not the expected damascene conversion for either character that many road/buddy movies utilise to show growth, development and a maturity and, as at least some of the narrative was fictional, it would have been possible to introduce such a plot to demonstrate a weight being lifted from either character. Both characters however, remain essentially the same despite having had their prejudices and beliefs challenged. There has been growth and maturity but both remain assured of their moral and ethical positions.

As their relationship develops Sixsmith's character becomes more confident in challenging Philomena's religious beliefs. Following a particularly lengthy tirade from Sixsmith whilst driving her to make her confession, their shared anger overflows and ends with this final angry exchange:

Sixsmith:    I read a very funny headline in a satirical  
  newspaper the other day about the earthquake  
  in Turkey, it said 'God outdoes terrorists yet

again...' Why God feels the need to suddenly wipe out hundreds and thousands of innocent people escapes me. You should ask him about that whilst you are in there. He'll probably say he moves in mysterious ways.

In her now usual pithy and illuminating style Philomena replies,

Philomena: [*getting out of the car*]

No, I think he'd say you were a feckin' eejit!

[*slams the car door*].

(Coogan & Pope, 2013).

Coming from some, we might see this is as simply an angry and unfocussed response to Sixsmith's outburst, however we have learned from a growing understanding of Philomena through the film to this point that despite her comparative lack of education, her religiously fuelled view of the world and her quiet servitude and deference she is not without the ability to tell a few home truths. The look on Sixsmith's face suggests that her guess at the Lord's response to Sixsmith's question is beginning to have some resonance for Martin.

The wound, both that of Philomena and the Church itself, is tangibly reopened in the very next scene when on entering the confessional the priest invites Philomena to unburden herself by saying, "Speak up now dear don't be afraid". This simple seven-word phrase, serves three purposes. Firstly, to highlight still further the issue that has been at the heart of her personal struggle about which she has remained silent for so long. Secondly, it unwittingly invites Philomena to speak out against the Church that she holds so dear. Thirdly, it introduces the irony of the Church which has remained silent on so many issues, affecting so many people, which suggests that she have courage and

speak up and out. The torture of the Church continues as the priest extends his invitation, "Have faith my dear, God will forgive you". Philomena leaves without making her confession. Perhaps a moment of contrapuntal realisation as both she and Sixsmith gain insight into their personal struggles over the last two scenes. Philomena leaves the confessional box and passes Sixsmith without blessing herself with holy water on exit, which strikes Martin as being strange. Whether it is coincidental or not Sixsmith is standing under the eighth station of the cross as Philomena walks past him and out of the church. The eighth station is commonly 'Jesus meets the Women of Jerusalem', the point in Christ's Passion at which Jesus is believed to have said to the women that they should not weep for him but for themselves and their own children. The look of concern on Sixsmith's face as she walks by him, ignoring the holy water and effectively, albeit only momentarily, walking away from the Church, is fuelled by guilt. He has perhaps challenged her faith once too often and that as a result he might be concerned that she is beginning to question her relationship with God and the Church for the first time. He chases after her and for the first time calls her "Phil" saying she was right he was being a "feckin' eejit" (with what I detect as a hint of an Irish accent). Her state of mind however is not as we might have thought. Her immediate thought is that she doesn't want the story publishing. Whether this is to save the Church or her from feeling an overwhelming sense of shame we are not completely sure. Nevertheless, the journey continues.

Sixsmith's mocking of Philomena through his mockery of and distaste for the institution of the Catholic Church becomes heightened over the course of the film. It takes on the anger that he feels Philomena should also reserve for the Church and in so doing brings them, Martin and Philomena, closer together. Whilst Philomena can still only feel a sense of shame rather than anger towards the Church, Martin will feel it for her (and us). His anger towards her and the Church by the end is actually his way of showing his respect and growing affection for Philomena.

The end of the film sees Sixsmith buying a religious trinket from the shop in the convent and giving it to Philomena to place on her son's grave. Whilst he

has in no way reconciled himself to the Church and the given religion of his childhood, he has grown reconciled to Philomena's position in this regard. The purchase of the plastic Jesus, showing a regard for her feelings and a disregard for his own, is a point of personal growth and development in itself for Sixsmith as portrayed in the film. It is at this point he says to Philomena that he will not be publishing the story, tacitly revealing his understanding of, rather than merely his observation and disbelief in, her continuing strength of feeling and devotion to the Church and her Catholicism. Ironically, and perhaps surprisingly the same journey has convinced Philomena that the story of what happened at the convent is one that should be told. This change of heart is greeted with a warm smile of recognition and understanding rather than the cold heart of a tabloid journalist and both exit the film with a greater personal sense of integrity perhaps than they entered.

"The story that attracted me", says Coogan in interview with John Kelly, "was one of faith and cynicism and... whether intellect gives you anymore insight into humanity than not having intellect". (Kelly 2013 08:09). Whilst this allowed Coogan to develop another angle on the relationship between Philomena and Sixsmith, it also serves to interrogate his own perceived lack of intellectual standing, youthful ignorance and uncertainty all those years ago when he started out working alongside Iannucci, Marber, Morris, Front and Mackichan on *On the hour* and *The day today*. More than anything, Coogan told me of the film:

The reason I picked it, the reason I picked that story is that I thought 'I know how to write about this because I know how I can make it funny, and I know this world, and I know these people like this Irish woman, I know what they are like.  
(Personal communication, November 20, 2015)

Despite the many narratives of silence, loss, departure and arrival within the film, Philomena is always portrayed as a strong character with an emerging confidence as her narrative unfolds. On one level, just one of the many thousands of women who quietly got on with bringing up families and entering the workforce, and whose stories remain largely untold. Coogan here is

contributing to those emerging stories. The ‘truth’ of his film springs from Coogan’s recognition and understanding of this generation of Irish people, and particularly the Irish in Britain and that he speaks confidently from within that community. He is interestingly both of and not of her culture and this insider/outsider perspective on Philomena’s generation in England contributes to the success of this character portrayal. Our interview continued,

I remember thinking that other people who don’t have that ‘Irishness’ if they tried to write a character like Philomena they would be, I think, reticent about laughing at them, because they might think that was illiberal, and erm... bullying, but I come from a background where you do laugh at people you love. A thing fairly peculiar to the Irish is that they show affection for each other not by saying I love you so much and hugging but mercilessly mocking each other. And in a strange way that’s how they say I love you – is by taking the piss. And that’s counterintuitive to people who aren’t familiar with it.  
(Personal communication, November 20, 2015)

Whilst for Coogan this is a point of fond recognition it had the opposite effect on some, as we heard in the conversations with other second and third-generation Irish in Manchester in Chapter 4. Coogan concludes,

There is a sort of a ‘dottiness’ to a certain generation of Irish women, but that’s also coupled with a kind of erm... generosity of spirit and also a kind of sadness at them having being...at having just acquiesced to this patriarchal society. (Personal communication, November 20, 2015)

Philomena’s faith in God remains strong despite her faith in one or more particular individuals being shaken. This echoes the strength of feeling encountered during interviews with Coogan and many others during this research, where the importance of religion and the Church was evidenced. Both played a large part in the lives of these first, second, third generation Irish families in the UK and whilst most of my contributors no longer considered themselves practising Catholics, and at times had clearly rejected the Church, the legacy of growing up in Irish Catholic households was clearly present.

In a 2013 interview for [theguardian.com](http://theguardian.com), Coogan again described the film as being a discussion that he has with himself writ large on screen:

This film for me was an expression of, I want to have a conversation, I want to do something that is authentic, and which has real sincerity and authenticity and real sentiment instead of sentimentality, it's about genuine sentiment... because I think people are hungry for it and there's not a lot of it about. (Shoad, Barnes, Swaby, and Remy, 2013. 10:27).

His search for authenticity is perhaps reflected and indeed captured in his 'familiarity' with the subject matter and having being brought up an Irish catholic in the diasporic context of England in the 1960s, 70s and 80s. He knows this landscape.

The film therefore might achieve three outcomes for Coogan. First, an attempt to provide audiences with what they want - genuine sentiment and sincerity in a world full of shallow Hollywood blockbuster movies. Second, to present with authenticity and respect a life (and a death). Authenticity in the sense that he is writing about real events and real people from a position of knowledge and therefore authority, and authoriality, and with a respect for the differing beliefs, faiths and ethics of the characters. Third, contiguous or indeed inherent in this a cry for recognition of his own claim to an Irish lineage which gives him the ability, license and validity to narrate these characters into existence. In a further echo of Thomas Flanagan's image of the shell (Higgins, 2016, p. 101) we can clearly visualise history whispering to Coogan of the past, reverberating in his ear as he transposes *Philomena* from Sixsmith's factual novel onto the screen. In casting himself as the middle-class English Catholic journalist and Dench as the diasporic *Philomena*, he is able to explore and reveal with authenticity on screen the tensions between the worlds he knows. The tensions between his place of origin and, if not his final destination, then at least his current location.

In considering Heddon's (2007) suggestion that "autobiographical performance was a means to reveal otherwise invisible lives... and as a way to bring into being a self" (p. 3), I suggest that the film *Philomena* is a form of

performative auto-ethnography and as such is, by this definition, a consciously designed and delivered project to reveal the self. Whilst Haddon's observations may have been directed towards the live 'theatre' performance and live engagement with an interactive audience, I propose that the 'liveness' of the situation is about the impact and the reception of the message not necessarily whether it was conveyed without interim mediation between the performer and the audience. The development of the script and the resultant exploration of his prejudices and concerns are no unconscious or accidental conceit they are carefully constructed insertions into someone else's story. Furthermore, he is able to tell one story whilst exploring the other and vice versa. The deliberate intertwining of fact and non-fact (Sixsmith being Catholic for example) is an instance of deliberate insertion which, when known, blur any perceived line between a truthful story and a truthful representation of a story. The film becomes simultaneously a construction and a reconstruction of the narrative self and self-narrated self, whilst it also narrativises, and so brings in to being, Philomena and her son Anthony. Through discussion with Coogan and the interrogation of secondary source material we begin to move beyond the action to appreciate the motivation for the action and move beyond the word to understand the motivation for the word. Whilst there are a number of intermediaries in the process of transmitting and receiving pre-recorded material such as a film, there is no interstitial uncertainty of intent in the end product.

Through a consideration of a small fraction of Coogan's work and a number of aspects of his personal life, we can begin to frame his sense of cultural and self-identity. He describes himself as "British but of Irish descent" – seemingly simple enough, and yet the way in which he plays with his Irish heritage in *Moone Boy* and the mockumentary, *Steve Coogan: The inside story*, reveals more of an understanding through observation and empirical engagement with aspects of Irishness than his early qualifying "but of Irish descent" might suggest. Through his treatment of the diasporic character of Philomena and an interrogation of her story, her beliefs and experiences at the hands of a repressive and religiously patriarchal Ireland, Coogan also evidences a continuing engagement with these aspects of implicit Irishness as legacy



issues of intellectual, spiritual and temporal concern. Coogan never claims to be Irish *per se*, but he does ask, through a number of characters and situations, that we acknowledge his credentials in order to validate his portrayal of Ireland and the Irish and perhaps by extension, to validate his right to an Irish identity. From Thicket's declaration, 'I'm a bit Irish' to the more finessed discussion of the relevance and resonance of his background in his decision to take up and tell Philomena's story, Coogan has been clear and vocal about his Irish heritage.

Regularly, I find myself returning to O'Toole's comments on Irishness in relation to Martin and John McDonagh. That the "crucial Ireland" was not "a place, a faith or a community" and yet I believe it at times to have been each and all of these, but that it was "just a voice in the head, a way of talking". It lends weight to my assertion that the third space, perhaps the fifth province in Irish terms, this new diasporic space has been internalized by generations of migrant descendants. We no longer harbour tangible dreams of returning across the water because in having never actually left we cannot in the same way actually return. But we can return to the Irishness that exists inside us. To that recursive matrix of identity most definitely temporally and corporeally located – internalized, embodied, and remembered/re-membered through the generations. This does not mean that there is not occasionally a deep yearning for the Irish idyll that we hold in our minds and hearts, as many previous generations before, just that deep within us, we know there is no return, because we have never truly left. Whilst we are forever negotiating the space between where we have come from and our final destination we will conveniently, if not necessarily simply, find it located within ourselves. How this expresses itself or how it is allowed to be expressed will be contingent on external forces.

When in a dark place in terms of his ability to cope with growing fame and notoriety, Coogan experienced panic attacks and a culmination of events saw him seeking advice from a psychiatrist. Of these sessions Coogan (2015) discloses,

He [the therapist] told me to breathe slowly and think of a place where I was happy as a child. I had to imagine sitting somewhere calm and looking out at the landscape. I always think of Ireland, of the farmhouse where I used to sit as a child and gaze out of the window at the rain. (p. 333).

A beautiful image, almost too contrived perhaps, but one, coming towards the end of his autobiography that sees him clearly reminiscing about an Ireland of his childhood, amongst the landscape of the Ireland of his parents and grandparents. That there is an absence of people in this remembrance is perhaps telling, but the place where he feels most at peace and most secure is the family home in Ireland. If memory is a series of forgettings, a continuous series of lacunae, then the embodiment of this archive protects, preserves and sustains the points of remembrance between. That it sustains is both beautiful and terrifying and perhaps the root of much global turmoil.

Coogan's therapeutic narrative of Ireland is however, interrupted by other more comical stimuli:

The other smell that evokes happy childhood memories for me – rather counter intuitively in this case – is the combination of salt, sea, beer, fags, puke and urine on a ferry. It reminds me of the one we used to get from Liverpool to Dublin, with the promise of two or three week's holiday to come. (Coogan, 2015, p. 109).

Transported by these smells and to be found somewhere between urban north Manchester and a farmhouse in Ireland's 'wild west' lies Coogan's Ireland. Coogan's (2015) autobiography considers the motivation for his retrospective gaze: "As you approach middle age, you start to think about where you come from. You start to realise that here is more life behind you than in front of you" (p. 95). As our interview moved towards its close, I asked whether he therefore felt a gravitational pull towards characters and situations with a more tangible connection to Ireland and the Irish:

Coogan: Maybe as you get older you sort of, you know, what's that Ian Forster quote? 'At the end of all your days you

return to where you came from and recognise the place for the first time', erm which I think I used in something?

BOS: It was Philomena

Coogan: Oh yes, sorry, it was Philomena! *[Laughs]*. Erm, yeah, so there could be a bit of that, you know.  
(Personal communication, November 20, 2015)

Bringing this chapter to a close, it may well be a distraction to observe that Tristram Shandy, the original tale from the mid 18<sup>th</sup> Century, was written by Anglo-Irish author Laurence Sterne<sup>133</sup> whilst he was living in England, but we can see the lure of Irish narratives appearing in Coogan's later professional choices perhaps beginning with this 2005 adaptation of Sterne's *The life and times of Tristram Shandy*. From here, we can identify a fascination through his appearance as 'Touchy' Feeley in *Moone Boy*, the fictionalisation of his own Aunt Peggy in the Mockumentary *Steve Coogan: The inside story*, and on to his role in the development and realisation of *Philomena*. More recently this might be evidenced in two developments - his latest film project, a film version of Naomi Jacobs 2015 autobiographical *Forgotten Girl*, and in the appointment of a new CEO for his production company Baby Cow. *Forgotten Girl* is a true story based on the life of Naomi Jacobs, a 32-year old woman who wakes up one morning with no memories of the last 15 years of her life due to a rare type of amnesia. The connection between Coogan and the film in development perhaps being as Ciara Hanstock writes, "Both of Naomi's granddads are African and both of her grandmas are Irish – a heritage that she is clearly proud of – and she says that keeping her race true to form in the film is important to her". (Hanstock 2016). Hanstock's interview with Jacobs continued to explore this rich heritage, with Jacobs recalling,

My sister always makes the joke, I'm African Irish which means I'm a good dancer and can drink you under the table. So I told [Steve Coogan] this and he burst out laughing and he just said, "that, in the film alone – that is such a rich background to work with". (Hanstock, 2016. Para 29).

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<sup>133</sup> Laurence Sterne was born Clonmell, Country Tipperary, in 1713 and died London 1768.

Recently it has been disclosed that Christine Langan, with whom Coogan has worked regularly, has been appointed to the role of CEO at Baby Cow following the departure of Henry Normal, who is himself second generation Irish. Both of Langan's parents came to England from Ireland in the 1950s and she has emerged from an emigrant working class background to work in the some of the highest profile roles in British TV.<sup>134</sup>

Coogan may not be explicitly attempting through his choice of subjects, narratives or colleagues, to claim a sense of Irish authenticity. However, in agreeing to introduce aspects of his private life into the public realm of the film narrative he displays a knowing perspective; one designed to disguise and reveal, disarm and reclaim the ownership of his narrative and by extension his identity. When he takes on Irish characters, themes, narratives and discourses in his work he evidences an empirically knowing perspective which empowers the narrative, and which challenges and supports the continuing discourse. He may indeed be seeking affirmation, confirmation and acceptance from others as a man of Irish descent but his intention is more likely to seek to affirm and confirm the authenticity of his perspective and the legitimacy of the narratives he seeks to explore, however comic (Francie 'Touchy' Feeley) or tragic (Philomena Lee).

In her consideration of the writer Nuala O'Faolain, O'Kane-Mara observes,

...her characters develop heightened states of Irish cultural awareness and identity from being removed from Ireland... Thus, both the fictional and non-fictional protagonists of O'Faolain's texts share a sense of Irish identity as formed in global locations outside Ireland through the interaction with a diverse group of people (2011, p. 66)

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<sup>134</sup> Langan see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2016/christine-langan-to-leave-bbc-films> and [http://www.heraldscotland.com/arts\\_ents/13206759.Scotland weaves into 25 years of BBC Films/](http://www.heraldscotland.com/arts_ents/13206759.Scotland%20weaves%20into%2025%20years%20of%20BBC%20Films/).

She concludes that, 'Individuals and groups in different geographical and geopolitical spaces can construct a version of Irishness that has little to do with where an individual lives or even where they began'. (p .80). This construction, I propose, is what we are able to observe through this closer reading of Coogan's creative outputs aligned with an understanding of his personal and domestic context. Furthermore, that through our individual lived experiences we all construct a version of Ireland, the Irish and Irishness for ourselves, (our individual versions of the 'human world' to requote Schiefflin), to which we can return at will as it is intellectually, spiritually and quite literally physically, within us to do so.

## Conclusion

This thesis has taken an auto-ethnographic and broad-spectrum performance studies approach to the second and third generation Irish in Manchester, with all the complex attendant issues of cultures and identities. This has, as set out in the preface, provided the opportunity to apply social-scientific and cultural study notions of performativity in everyday life, in identity construction, contestation and re-affirmation, and in cultural practice as broadly conceived. The specifics of the study may have wider application in understanding performance of culture and performance of identity but with a specific relevance to diasporic milieu. I demonstrate, from within a small sample group, that a generation has emerged from a broadly identifiable *mise-en-scène*, with rich and influential experiences which are reflected with remarkable individuality and insight. Through conversation, reflection and analysis, I identify the complex frame of inter- and intra-generational social interaction that has enabled each of my contributors to perform themselves into something new.

A number of key and recurrent themes are explored throughout this thesis. Of particular interest was the interplay between narratives of visibility and invisibility and also the disguise-and-reveal aspects of the masks and tropes of Irishness adopted by both the first, and subsequent generations of English-born Irish. The question of visibility/invisibility was fascinating as interviews with many of the second-generation Irish in Manchester revealed, contrary to Kiberd's view that under-reporting and under-scrutiny of the subject group was at the root of their invisibility, that it was the envelope of Irishness that surrounded them, at home, on the streets, in school that made them invisible to themselves. The more strictly performative venues such as Irish clubs and pubs and, for many men at least, the work place, allowed the Irish to reveal themselves to each other but it was only in the broader diasporic space, "inhabited not only by those who have migrated and their descendants, but

equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous", (Brah, 1996. p. 181), that the second generation Irish began to recognise their alterity. This provokes discussion concerning issues of anonymity and identification, inclusion and exclusion, time and place, and the public and the private in the lives of Irish migrant families. Bhabha's 'shadow of the nation' falling 'on the condition of exile' is acknowledged and manifest in the history of Irish migration, of diasporic identity, in sectarianism and in judgements of authenticity. The significance of emigration itself should not be ignored and I argue throughout the thesis that the legacy of emigration through the 1940s, 50s and 60s is both a powerful and traumatic experience that continues to fall across families both in Ireland and overseas. There was both ambivalence and ambiguity in the interviews and, in the analysis, it remained the case for many that the idea and a memory of Ireland, and their upbringing in Irish households and communities, provided strong emotional ties. Alongside the consideration of traditional art forms such as music, dance, singing and storytelling, that all play a major part in Irish cultural continuity and cultural remembering, material culture in the domestic arena was found to have significant impact and legacy issues. Both Billig and Francis King respectively explored the implications of *Banal nationalism* (2005) and *Material culture* (2009) allowing conclusions to be drawn that suggested the mise-en-scène of the home both influenced childhood experiences and frames current memories providing key visual and physical prompts for cultural remembering. Part of the legacy of this materially reinforced cultural remembering however, was the emergence of the epithet 'plastic paddy'. Initially an 'othering' and distancing device based on class, power and authenticity it has been reclaimed to the extent that it is used *within* the second-generation Irish community to describe some of the second-generation Irish community. There are, it would appear, hierarchies of agreed 'authentic' Irishness in play. The interplay between Irishness and Catholicism is explored, making a case for the meaningful separation of one from the other, whilst recognising its ongoing legacy and whilst the English Catholic education system appears to have privileged Catholicism over Irishness the home provided a counterpoint and refuge from casual racism and cultural 'othering'.

Through memory, post-memory, and fabricated cultural memory, we explored a nation seeking to affirm its existence and fill “the void opened up by the uprooting of communities and seeking to compensate for loss”, (Kearney, 1996. p.193). We also examined the repackaging of diasporic activities as a commodity in the generation of a ‘Brand Ireland’, and the extent to which it was exported to the world, and thus to its diaspora, creating ambivalence around notions of authenticity, acceptance and belonging. Through the use of pentimento as a device to visualise emerging cultural identity I propose that if there is such a thing as ‘authenticity’ it will not be found in recreating an agreed and externally validated version of the past. Authenticity is not found in mimesis but in endless recalibrations that evidence continuity through renewal not repetition. It is through memories, and voices resonating in the head, that such ambivalence and ambiguity is created and sustained. The resulting hyphenated identities evidenced regional and national identifications alongside a consideration of the centrifugal/centripetal nature of Ireland as a nation-state. Reasons for the acknowledged rootlessness of the second-generation were considered. One conclusion being that it may just as likely be the rejection of a strong Irish culture nurtured in the home and reinforced in social and cultural performance spaces that was a cause of the subsequent rootlessness as much as the displaced and anachronistic transference of culture and identity in and of itself. For some, the resultant ‘third space’ is a comfortable new home as Julia concluded in our interview, “I am second generation Irish... and I have a space and there is a world that is second generation Irish”, whilst for others it remains as unstable and unrecognizable as ever. We also heard a view of the second-generation Irish as being “so busy being Irish they’ve not really found who they are”. It seems there will always be a struggle, to paraphrase Len Ang, to reconcile an ‘imperfect fit’. The sophistication of my interviewees’ reflections and subsequent analysis problematises these distinctions and interrogates their complexity, perhaps reaching its ironic apotheosis in an interview with a third-generation Irish musician who despite claiming a more English than Irish identification was proud of her Mancunian identity precisely because it has a reputation for producing world-class Irish musicians. The thesis considered how an initially debilitating lack of confidence, social and political agency, and even a ‘name’



underpinned the lives of the diaspora. It has been interesting to consider that the “destablising stereotype” of which President Michael Higin’s speaks was, for the second-generation, emerging from the within the 1980/90s wave of middle-class Irish emigrants in the form of the plastic paddy epithet rather than necessarily from the host country. Positively, in many instances, we have seen that the alterity of the second-generation position, rather than stifling ambition and preventing identity traction, provided the necessary friction for them to realise that not only did they have something to say but also that it was worth saying. We should note Schiefflin’s view that, “The central issue of performativity, whether in ritual performance, theatrical entertainment or the social articulation of ordinary human situations, is the imaginative creation of a human world”. (Schiefflin, 1998. p. 205), and whilst it may still be the case that the second- and third-generation Irish do not have the “privilege of a *name*” (Campbell, 1998, p. 168), we do now have a voice and growing agency.

The first three chapters employed autoethnographic, performance studies and performance theory approaches to support the narrative flow from the external Irishness of the global stage to the internal Irishness of the individual. The use of this broad-spectrum performance studies approach enabled an ‘othering’ of the Irish diasporic context and, as a starting point, to effectively ‘make strange’ my own recognisable culture. This position, Schechner suggests, permits “the performance studies fieldworker [at] a Brechtian distance allowing for criticism, irony, and personal commentary, as well as sympathetic participation. (Schechner, 2002, p. x.). This in turn provided a framework through which I considered the activation of the living archive and the re-narrativisation of resonant embodied histories in the individual “seizing of narrative agency” (Harte 2006). The next stage was an immersion in the domestic narratives of the second- and third- generation Irish in Manchester through traditional fieldwork bridging the distinction between autoethnography, performance ethnography and the ethnography of performance manifest in the continued gathering of ethnographic data. These conversations personalized the political discourse of the preceding chapters and as Warren (2006) observes, “gives life to people in context, makes embodied practices meaningful, and generates analysis for seeing the conditions that make the socially taken-for-granted

visible as a process.” (p. 318.). The interviews then provided a revisualisation of the local and domestic *mise-en-scène* of Irish households in Greater Manchester, allowing issues raised throughout the thesis to that point to be explored, contradicted and validated. These conversations also recognised the significance of ‘this time’ and ‘this place’, as an important rehearsal space for the forming and performing of Irish identities. Central to the thesis, which is, after all, an attempt to utilise performance theory, are the ways in which quotidian and cultural performance have been harnessed as tools of negotiation, as sometimes resistant, sometimes affirmative and sometimes celebratory acts in the construction of new identities. These ongoing performances reveal the embodied histories of individual performers, partly choreographed by the whispering shell of culture and memory, masking and unmasking through a pentimento of identity. From the intimate to the distant, this thesis has therefore considered quotidian performance and performativity as it relates to identity. Significantly, I noted that my second and third generation contributors were not fully assimilated as has been proposed, but rather they absorbed (and were reciprocally absorbed by) Manchester and its cultural influences. They thereby established, via a carefully curated habitus, a new inclusive *Heimat*, born of dislocation. To requote Baumann (2005):

Perhaps instead of identities, inherited or acquired, it would be more in keeping with the realities of the globalising world to speak of identification, a never-ending, always incomplete, unfinished and open ended activity in which we all, by necessity or choice, are engaged. (p. 453).

This internalising of the emigrant dialectic coupled with a strength of identification with both the nation and notion of Ireland and with the Manchester region created a hugely significant physical and emotional attachment. The final section of the thesis searches out a mirroring of these processes in the construction of theatrical and mediated performance through an exploration of the work of Terry Christian and Steve Coogan. The examination of these two professional performers from this same social and cultural background, and as the generative sites of their own identities, considers how these same processes, experiences and reflections have underpinned, influenced, and indeed provided the material for their writing and

performance. Their interstitial positionality allowed intimacy and distance to permeate their characters and stories with familiarity, truth and value. Terry Christian has found humour and anger in his indicative 'life performance' and played this out on a bigger stage and to a wider audience, and in effect, 'dramatises' or 'performs' this thesis. A new reading of Steve Coogan's work suggests three modes of performance: first, Coogan the outsider satirises English mores; second; Coogan plays complex games of revealing and masking multiple versions of self; third, a searching and ultimately serious engagement with his engagement with Ireland.

As noted in the preface to this thesis, these analyses remain firmly within a broad-spectrum performance studies approach, and remain steadfastly concerned with the ethnography of performance, because they focus on the refraction of their originators experience of social and cultural performativity through the prism of the arts. The application of a performance theory perspective, in the context of this fraction of the Irish diaspora, reveals a playful and generous spirited approach to complex and serious matters of identity and place in the world – to the ways in which lives are led and meanings made through and for the generation of performance.

### **Considerations and suggestions for further research**

This study has contributed to the developing body of work concerned with diasporic identities, their construction, rehearsal and performance. In an era of so-called 'radicalisation', wider implications of this study may be found in the further insight gained into the mechanisms of cultural continuity, identity politics and self-ascription that can contribute to diasporic fragmentation, exclusion and isolationism, and that results in the most barbaric, murderous and destructive of identity performances.

More constructively, in arguing the benefits of a post-national sensibility that continues to celebrate cultural difference, this thesis expands the frame of reference for Campbell's evolving corpus argument for the recognition of second-generation Irish musicians, to include particular reference to comedy

writing and performance. As such, further exploration could lead to a re-reading of existing and contemporary material of the work of other northwest comedians and writers such as Caroline Aherne, Peter Kay, Jason Manford, and John Thompson. It also calls for similar considerations to be applied more widely to English-born comedians of Irish descent for example Lucy Porter, Jimmy Carr, Henry Normal and Kathy Burke.

I am acutely aware that my research, although not initially designed to do so, appears to capture a particular strand of second- and third-generation Irishness. That which is largely removed, or has removed itself, from close ties with Irish traditional cultural activities, communities, and organised religion whilst in most cases maintaining a network of second and third-generation Irish friendships. There remains a second-generation Irish identity, perhaps even a community, which retains closer ties to the multiple venues and stages (through religion, education and social and cultural activities) for the continued rehearsal and performance of their diasporic Irishness and from which further clear cultural continuity could be expected. That my study group largely reflects my own positioning might be worthy of consideration in and of itself, and may be a product of the 'insider' research position taken to explore this auto-ethnographically inspired thesis. These other more referential communities may more overtly reflect the natural affinity that many diasporic groups feel and exhibit towards their cultural origins and visibly celebrate their genuineness of origins, but would also provide a distinct area for further study.

It will be to my eternal regret that I was unable to interview Caroline Aherne for this project. As the slight majority of my contributors are female, I do provide a clear opportunity to hear a female perspective on second- and third-generation Irishness. Aherne however, would have provided additional and rich material from which to draw a parallel case study with Christian and Coogan. Her all too early and sad death at the age of 52 leaves a legacy of work that minutely observes working-class and I would argue, diasporic Irish working-class life and culture. Her work is an area I am keen to explore beyond this thesis.

Building on Johanne Devlin Trew's (2013) publication *Leaving the north*, the more recent Dawson, Dover and Hopkin's (2016) edited *The Northern Ireland Troubles in Britain*, and timely in the light of a 2017 *Guardian* article suggesting the emergence of an identifiable Northern Irish identity distinct from both England and Ireland<sup>135</sup>, an additional area of study suggested by this research would found be in the nuanced experiences of the Northern Irish diaspora. My research therefore deliberately excluded such identities, considering this to be a valid area for independent consideration rather than as part of this investigation. It therefore unfortunately placed Peter Kaye, a northwest comedian, actor and writer whose mother was born, and whose family still lives, in Coalisland, Co.Tyrone, outside of the framework of this study.

This thesis alights briefly on the notion of a post-Catholic Irishness. The Church has been so central in shaping the experiences and behaviour both of the Irish born and the global diaspora, and its embedded impact on immigrant Irish identities so clearly articulated, it is difficult, to imagine what it means to be Irish in the absence of a strong accompanying Catholicism. Study of both the Irish in Ireland and in their new homes overseas no longer in thrall to a Church of arguably diminishing power would be useful as a prospective tool in the on-going understanding of globalised identities.

Much of the available research concentrates on second-generation identities with little in depth consideration of third and fourth generation identifications. As it was suggested, and refuted, that Irish assimilation was practically complete within one generation, a greater understanding of the third and fourth-generations (and perhaps even beyond) would be most revealing. I say this in the knowledge that a number of emerging performers of Irish traditional music and dance in Manchester are third generation Irish. The recursive nature of Irish emigration would suggest particular interest and irony might be found in the resultant negotiation of identity between these third-generation

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<sup>135</sup> See O'Toole, F. (2017. March 12). 'After Brexit, the two tribes recede – and a Northern Irish identity emerges'. The Guardian. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/mar/12/brexit-own-goal-changes-politics-northern-ireland>

Irish and their second-generation peers, i.e. the children of the 1980s diaspora that are credited with originally coining the term Plastic Paddy.

### **The Final Word?**

This thesis began in the living room of my childhood home listening to my Dad 'outing' people of Irish Catholic descent as they appeared on the television screen in front of us. In taking this journey, I have been able to test the limits of my own liminalities, comparing and contrasting my experiences and outlook with those of a similar but not identical context. Further, I have considered aspects of my evolving identity, motivation and confidence through that of the second and third-generation Irish in Manchester. Through seemingly benign post-memory, contested expressions of cultural continuity and continuing political and cultural self-interest we see, in the diasporic setting of the Northwest of England, the power of the nation, and the shadow of the nation and of emigration falling across the generations. As I write, we are presented daily with a growing visible support for a global shift towards more totalitarian and reactionary governance where the 'voice of the people' is selectively utilised for the prosecution of ideologically driven policies. In this uncertain future, I look forward to the emergence, if not unfortunately the return, of a more post-national sensibility. An inclusive world that distances no one, and celebrates cultural difference. Of course, in such a borderless utopia, we could not easily enjoy the spectacle of sporting contests between England and Ireland as these national distinctions would cease to have any currency except in cultural memory. As I await the final game of the 2017 Six Nations rugby tournament, I once again test the boundaries of my diasporic space, my third space, my fifth province and find that despite the journey undertaken, my post-national sensibility, and my evolving sense of self, the residual strength of my identification still shouts #COYBIG.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> #COYBIG – acronym for Come on you boys in Green. "Boys in Green" composed for the 1988 European Championship and attributed to the Republic of Ireland Football squad. Still sung today it is now a well-known and well-used hashtag on social media platforms.

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## Appendix A

### Spreadsheet of Contributors

	<b>Anonymised Name</b>	<b>Age at the point of interview</b>	<b>Occupation at the point of the interview</b>	<b>Generation/ Parents' place of birth</b>	<b>Interview date</b>	<b>Transcribed by</b>
1	Mary	47	Teacher	Second-Generation Mother-Irish, Father-Irish	27.05.15	Adele H
2	Michelle	32	Debt Manager	Second-Generation Mother-Irish, Father-Irish	27.05.15	Adele H
3	Caroline	49	Homeware Stores, shop floor	Second-Generation Mother-Irish, Father-Irish	27.05.15	Adele H
4	Ruth	36	Hardware Store, shop floor	Second-Generation Mother-Irish, Father-Irish	27.05.15	Adele H
5	Tim	50	TV producer	Second-Generation Mother-Irish, Father-Irish	03.06.15	Bev M
6	Carolyn	55	Teacher	Second-Generation Mother-Irish, Father-Irish	11.06.15	Bev M
7	Bernard	50	Teacher	Second-Generation Mother-Irish, Father-Irish	15.06.15	Tina C
8	Ellie	49	Teacher	Second-Generation Mother-Irish, Father-Irish	16.06.15	Adele H
9	Martin	50	Electrician	Second-Generation Mother-Irish, Father-Irish	24.06.15	Tina C

10	Julia	50	Writer	Second-Generation Mother-Irish, Father-Irish	16.10.15	Bev M
11	Sean	54	Site manager	Second-Generation Mother-Irish, Father-Irish	27.10.15	Adele H
12	Niamh	52	Home Office	Second-Generation Mother-Irish, Father-Irish	27.10.15	Adele H
13	Eamonn O'Neal (Eamonn)	62	Managing Editor Manchester Evening News/Broadcaster	2 <sup>nd</sup> Mother-Irish, Father-Irish	13.11.15	Adele H
14	Steve Coogan	50	Producer/Writer/ Actor	Third-Generation Maternal Grand Parents-both Irish Paternal GP 1 Irish-born	19.11.15	Bev M
15	Gerry	49	HMRC	Second-Generation Mother- Irish, Father-Irish	04.12.15	Tina C
16	Rachel	48	Musician/teacher	Third-Generation Maternal Grandparents-Irish born Paternal Grandparents-English-born	07.12.15	Bev M
17	Martha	61	Retired teacher	Second-Generation Mother-Irish, Father- English	10.12.15	Tina C



## Appendix B

### Example email follow up to initial telephone conversation

Dear XXXXX

Thank you so much for thinking about taking part in this research project. I include some further details below about the project so that you have more of an idea about what I am doing. If, having ploughed through this lengthy email, you would still like to take part then that would be great. Just drop me an email and I'll take it from there.

Hopefully I will identify a good number of people over the next few months and through the collection of information and reminiscence via interviews get further insight into our particular 'condition'.

Sorry for the lengthy email but here goes...

My research is focusing around notions of second generation Irish identity in England, and ultimately the expression of that identity through creativity and performance. So, if there are three parts to this, the first part of my thesis explores Irish identity in England quite broadly looking at 1st generation (your and my parents) immigrant experience and how it contributed to the context (geographical and cultural etc) that produced the second generation (you and me).

I then want look in more detail at the second generation (us) experience of growing up 'Irish' in England (or not depending on how we feel about it) and this is why I am setting up these interviews so that I can get some first hand reflections. Though this is not finally decided I anticipate a strong reference to the Northwest of England and in particular Manchester in this section.

I hope to explore how issues associated with migration, settlement, acceptance/assimilation, separatism/exclusion impacted ***on the experiences of the children of those who came over***

***to England roughly around the 1950s/60s.*** I am also interested in how people think of themselves today – a new take on the continuing 'are we English are we Irish' debate. What does it mean to be second generation Irish?

I am interested in hearing how people's childhoods were, or were not, underpinned by a sense of 'Irishness', how culture was maintained and passed on, or not. How they viewed themselves then (if consciously at all) and how they see themselves now.

I'm interested in many aspects of the everyday culture we experienced as children of immigrant parents including experiences of home life, (home furnishings even - pictures, souvenirs), fashion (or lack of) schooling, playing out in the street, time spent in Irish clubs, time spent in Ireland on holiday, and the resulting relationships of both the parents but particularly the children, to Ireland itself.

Then in the third section, (once I have completed parts one and two) I aim to have a stab at seeing how these background experiences may have a lasting impact (easily traceable or not in some cases) to creativity, creative outputs and performance (some work has been done already on musicians such as The Pogues, Dexy's, The Smiths, Oasis for example).

For the interviews, I will have some questions to help guide the conversation but I guess it could go in a number of directions after that. I would need to record the conversation for appropriate record keeping purposes and so that I can transcribe accurately if that's OK too.

Apologies for bombarding you with info but best to know the purpose and methods before committing to anything I think.

This perhaps seems a little broad perhaps I know, but hopefully you get the idea?

If you are still interested then please just email me back and I'll contact you to set up a discussion/interview.

You have my email address here but if it is easier (and for future reference) you can also get me on xxxxxxxxxxxx or xxxxxxxxxxxx.

thanks again,  
brendan

Brendan O'Sullivan

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## Appendix C

### Interview prompts

**Introduction** - Tell me a little about where your parents were from, what they did for a living, how they met, when they came to England and what brought them to Manchester.

### The Past

Tell me about the **area you were brought up in**. Were there many other Irish or other nationalities around.

Did you feel Irish at that time - Did you feel you wanted to be Irish

Did you go to Irish Clubs/pubs

Did you visit Ireland as a child? Where did you go – mother or father’s county – both?

How did you feel when you were there – how were you received.  
(Voices in other ears/Christian (“feck off back to England yer Bowsie bastard”)).

What did you think about your relatives (peers/cousins in particular) – how did they treat you - their knowledge of Ireland and Irish culture

Tell me about your **schooling** – was it Catholic School/many irish (Hickman, Morgan et al)

Irish activities (music, dance for example) - St Patrick’s Day?

How important WAS and then IS **religion** to you then and now. (Activities, Church going, serve on the altar)

Terry Christian says in his autobiographies that its very different growing up of Irish descent to being English – would you agree? What do you think he means.

Is there a difference growing up Irish descent in England than growing up Irish in Ireland – if so, what might these be

Your **home** - Can you remember anything in the house growing up which was a pointer to Irishness – (describe ornaments, pictures, holy icons, holy water) – (staging Irishness)

Have you ever been aware of anti-Irish feeling growing up

Would you say there was an anti-English feeling in your house as you grew up

**Make sure venues and activities are covered – church, school, home, pub and clubs, music/dance, travel to Ireland**

### **The Present - Identity – English/Irish/Mancunian**

Do you think of yourself as English or Irish – (possibly Mancunian?)  
(do you feel more northern than English and/or Irish – (Christian - Mancunian first then Irish-catholic))

Where do you call home?

Have you heard the term Manchester-Irish – if so, is there something about a Manchester-Irish identity that is perhaps different from Birmingham/London Irish?

Have you heard the term plastic paddy – what do you understand by the term – do you use it?

Do you have an English/Irish passport.

How do you fill in questionnaires in terms of ethnicity – British, Irish, other?

Do you think there are physical characteristics/traits of Irish people?

Can you recognise Irish people from earlier generations when you see them – is it visible? (Campbell/Petrides Pogues dress – equal measures Brendan Behan and Irish grandad)

Allied to above - Someone once wrote that Irishness only lasts for one generation and that the second-generation Irish are really only visible/recognisable to themselves

Do you recognise 'Irishness' in other people (second generation not older generation) – do you seek to introduce yourself

Can you recognise younger second generation Irish people like ourselves and also the new generation of immigrants?

### **The Future - Cultural Continuity**

Do you take part in any Irish related activities now? Language classes, dancing, Going to Irish Centre/Irish pubs. Are you part of any Irish cultural groups or associations

Do you hang around with Irish/2 GI people now (Mark E Smith not conscious just accidental the sort of people I got on with...)

Do you still visit now – relatives or holidays – your ‘own’ counties or whole country

Your children - Children’s names? Do you encourage them to play music, dance, play sports – How do they think of/see Ireland?

There has been a new wave of Irish immigration since the collapse of the Celtic Tiger. Do you think this has impacted on Irish culture in England – are you aware of any impact?

### **Last Question**

**How would you describe Irishness – what is it? What does it mean to you?**

- **ANYTHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO ADD?**
- **ANYTHING THAT YOU ARE CURRENTLY UNSURE ABOUT RE THE RESEARCH THAT I CAN HELP WITH**
- **WOULD YOU BE HAPPY TO CARRY ON THE DISCUSSION AND BE INTERVIEWED AGAIN IF NECESSARY**

## Appendix D

### Consent form

**Title of Project: John Bull's Other Ireland (working title)**

**Name of Researcher: Brendan O'Sullivan**

**Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. Your involvement is much appreciated and will make a very valuable contribution to the relevance and success of the project. You will be asked to engage in an informal discussion about your experience of being of Irish descent in England and I hope that you enjoy the discussion whilst also knowing you are contributing to an important piece of research.**

Please initial box

- |    |  |                      |
|----|--|----------------------|
| 1. | I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet, dated ....., for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.   | <input type="text"/> |
| 2. | I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason and without my care or legal rights being affected.  | <input type="text"/> |
| 3. | I understand that the discussion will be recorded and later transcribed for accuracy. Extracts from the transcript may be included in the final thesis as well as any other academic papers which are produced as a result of this study | <input type="text"/> |
| 4. | I agree to take part in this study   | <input type="text"/> |

Your privacy will be respected at all times and at your request you will not be identified by name or any other means in any published work deriving from this project. A transcript will also be made available if you would like to retain a copy.

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_

contact address

contact number

Date

Signature

Brendan O'Sullivan

Researcher

Date

Signature

**Thank you for your interest in this research.**